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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

HUICHOL INDIAN YARN PAINTINGS AND SHAMANISM: AN AESTHETIC ANALYSIS

BY

HOPE MACLEAN ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall 1995

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to conduct an aesthetic analysis of Huichol Indian yarn paintings, and to explain their linkage to the art of shamanic vision. Huichol Indians live in Northwest Mexico; their yarn paintings are a modern ethnic or tourist art which evolved from traditional religious offerings.

Using yarn, wax, and wood, the Huichol artists create vibrant paintings with glowing colours, and complex imagery which depict myths and ceremonies as well as dreams and visions of their makers. Huichol Indian yarn paintings are becoming one of the world's great indigenous art-forms but comparatively little is known about them. How did this art-form evolve and what does it retain of its pre-Columbian origins? Is it no more than a commercial tourist art, or does it exemplify underlying concepts drawn from Huichol shamanic traditions?

This study addresses these questions, using aesthetic analysis to explore the underlying concepts exemplified in yarn paintings. Anderson (1990:4) defines aesthetic anthropology as the cross-cultural study of philosophies of art; it examines the purpose and nature of art, in order to clarify why artists make their artistic choices. Using interviews with a range of Huichol yarn painters, and analysis of yarn painting photographs, this study examines the formal properties and content of the paintings; the artists' backgrounds, motivations, and career choices; the evolution of the art-form and the influence of western buyers; and the role which shamanic vision plays in the art.

The study shows that, while yarn paintings are a modern art-form which responds to the demands of the market, there is a deep aesthetic structure which remains Huichol. This artistic philosophy is based on concepts such as the use of

colour to express dynamic equilibrium; and a linkage between soul concepts, shamanic vision, and the production of art. These results suggest that aesthetic analysis of art, whether traditional or modern, has valuable potential for understanding deeply-embedded cultural values.

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CHAPTER 1
ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

It was December 1988; and I had travelled four days and thousands of miles, from Ottawa, Canada, to Tepic, Mexico, and from there to Tucson, Arizona, to meet a Huichol Indian woman I barely knew. When I finally found Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos (Lupe) in a house on the outskirts of Tucson, I realized that the tourist Spanish I had been learning from tapes was wholly inadequate. I could hardly understand anything she and her family were saying. I felt lost and discouraged. "Why did I come so far to see someone I can't even speak to?" I asked myself. I was ready to turn around and go home again.

The next morning, Lupe and I were sitting in the living room. Everyone else had gone out. On the table next to us was a copy of *Art of the Huichol Indians*, a beautifully illustrated book with many reproductions of yarn paintings. Lupe picked up the book and opened it to an illustration of one of her own yarn paintings (Berrin 1978:cover illustration and p. 123).

"*Esto es Tamatsi Kauyumari* (Sp: and Hui: This is *Tamatsi Kauyumari*, the Deer-god)," she said, pointing to a picture of a deer-person holding a bow. I wrote down *Tamatsi Calumari*.

"*Es el poderoso del venado* (Sp: It is the power of the deer)." She spoke slowly, sounding out each syllable. I wrote down the words she used. She waited while I looked up *poderoso* and *venado* in my dictionary.

Slowly we worked our way through all the images in the yarn painting: the altar in the foreground; the Deer-god, *Tamatsi Kauyumari*, a shamanic figure who wields a bow [1]; the evil *brujo* (Sp: sorcerer) called *Kieri* (Hui: *Datura*) [2] who is being shot by *Tamatsi Kauyumari*; the deception practiced by those who follow the evil plant, *Datura*, instead of the good spirit of the peyote cactus; the deer, as the source of spiritual power; and how the deer helps the shaman to sing.

In a few hours, even though we were almost incapable of carrying on a conversation in Spanish, Lupe had used her yarn painting to give me a lesson in some of the basic concepts of Huichol shamanism. One yarn painting had been a teaching tool, a vehicle for establishing a relationship between two people from very different cultures, and a window into Huichol mysticism.

From that experience, I realized that yarn paintings were more than just pretty ethnic designs made for sale to tourists. A study of Huichol yarn paintings might provide a deeper insight into the Huichol culture and the shamanism it is based on. This study is the result of that realization; an attempt to discover what, in fact, can be learned from and about the yarn paintings.

The art collector Vincent Price once said:

> As a collector I feel myself strangely moved by things I know men have worshipped or which played a role in their relationship to the gods; I think perhaps they infused something of their own soul into what might otherwise be no more than a thing, beautiful in form perhaps, but still only a thing. I wish I knew something of that soul, of the culture which is its manifestation and which it expresses; I wish the ethnologist would, or could, immerse himself in it, truly immerse himself, and interpret it for me from the inside out, not the outside in. This is something the historian cannot do, neither the historian of events, nor of art. (Price, cited in Furst 1966:3).

Price's poignant remarks sum up both the hope and the dilemma of many western observers in the face of art made by other cultures. There is a haunting sense that these arts have a deep spiritual meaning which is hidden from, or lost to, western society. One longs to reach out and feel the sense of reverence and mystery that seems inherent in these arts. At the same time, Price recognized that truly experiencing these sensibilities is something which only a person profoundly immersed in the culture can do. Price sensed the lack of such intense cultural understanding in the theoretical approaches adopted by art historians; he hoped that somehow the ethnographer or anthropologist might be able to fill the gap.

The longing which Price expressed surrounds the field of Huichol yarn paintings. Art dealers and critics write of an awed fascination with the mystical themes and obscure symbolism which pervade the paintings (Becerril 1986; Von Bolschwing 1992). Everywhere I went, as I interviewed dealers and buyers, people asked me if I was going to "explain" the paintings. In their questions, I felt the same intense longing which Price expressed, a desire to touch and understand the ancient pre-Columbian beliefs which the Huichols apparently bring forward into the modern world. This fascination almost certainly lies behind the Huichol yarn paintings' meteoric rise in popularity.

As I set out on this research, I too was trying to understand what the paintings might be teaching; yet I feel confined by the limits of the ethnographer's ability to enter into and describe another culture. As Geertz (1973:29) laments, "Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is." Moreover, clarifying the role of the spiritual in art is a daunting task. Both art and spirituality are notoriously slippery subjects.

One anthropological approach which may give shape to these questions is the analysis of aesthetics. Aesthetic anthropology is the cross-cultural study of philosophies of art; its goal is to clarify "the fundamental nature and value of art" (Anderson 1990:4). An aesthetic analysis looks at questions such as who makes the art; what purposes it is intended to serve from the culture's own point of view; what concepts underly ideas of "good" or "bad" art; what technical or formal qualities art should have; and what content, or topics and ideas it should deal with.

Aesthetic analysis deals with both "etic" and "emic" types of data (Anderson 1990:3-4); for example, a recounting of the materials used in yarn paintings is etic data, which is observable and can be studied through methods applicable in any population. Emic information "exists only in the minds of the culture's members" (Anderson 1990:3). Questions such as why a person should make a yarn painting, or what constitutes an appropriate use of materials are emic. It is important to note that information about aesthetics cannot be determined simply by looking at another culture's works. Inevitably, we will judge that culture's works through the aesthetic bias of our own culture, whatever our culture may be. It is only by talking to people from the culture which produces the art, and to the artists themselves, that we can begin to understand the complex intellectual and metaphysical constructs that are often a part of their art. Adopting the model suggested by Anderson, this approach to emic aesthetics is the particular focus of this study.

Aesthetic analysis has much in common with a long-used method of anthropology--describing the world view of a culture. Geertz (1973:126-7) distinguishes the two as a difference between perceptions of the world as it operates, and the underlying values which give that perception meaning:

> In recent anthropological discussion, the moral (and aesthetic) aspects of a given culture, the evaluative elements, have commonly been summed up in the term "ethos", while the cognitive, existential aspects have been designated by

> the term "world view." A people's ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the the underlying attitude towards themselves and their world that life reflects. Their world view is their picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society.

Thus world view analysis tends to focus on questions such as how a culture structures its perception of the universe, the supernatural, and the place of humans in it, as well as questions such as how people should conduct themselves in relation to the world and each other.

The aesthetic analysis of art deals with many of the same questions as world view analysis; however, the focus is more specifically on how art manifests these basic philosophical concepts, either in art objects such as paintings and sculpture, or in performance arts such as music and drama. Aesthetic analysis attempts to explicate the relation between the arts and the philosophies which give them meaning, from the standpoint of the producing cultures.

This focus on the emic viewpoint of the culture itself is one key which sets aesthetic analysis apart from the method of art history or traditional museology. As Forge (1973:xiv) points out, art historians have been interpreting the artistic productions of other cultures for over a hundred years. While anthropologists have refrained from assigning meaning when little is known about the producing culture, art historians and museologists have rushed in to give interpretations of the use and value of the art, based solely on their own personal or cultural understanding. These meanings may or may not have anything to do with the point of view of the producing culture.

Thus, there is in the literature no shortage of writing about the arts of small-scale societies, including what was until recently called "primitive art." Much of this literature is concerned with describing the art, where it comes from, how it is made, and who the artists may be. A principal focus is classifying objects and developing typologies; but as Anderson (1990:6) points out, very little of this writing addresses the meanings which the artists themselves and their culture assign to their art. Anderson found that there was a shortage of this type of aesthetic information in the literature. This lack limits the anthropologist's ability to do cross-cultural comparisons, or to deepen our understanding of the functions of art in human societies. This study of Huichol yarn paintings is intended as a contribution towards the literature of aesthetics.

If an anthropologist is to address meanings assigned by the culture itself, research cannot be done from an armchair. One must go out into the field and talk to the people who make the art--the artists themselves--and to those who use the art, either within the producing culture or in the consuming culture. Only through this type of first-hand statement about purpose and philosophy can we begin to develop a full picture of the aesthetic systems surrounding the production of art.

An aesthetic analysis resembles a symbolic or semiotic analysis, but the focus of these latter types of research is somewhat different. Symbolic analysis focusses more on a detailed exploration of the meanings assigned to particular symbols within the culture, and to the inter-relationships between those symbols. A semiotic analysis attempts to decode a system of meaning within a particular culture. In both cases, the focus is on the "what" of the art, on the images and the meaning behind them; in aesthetic analysis, the focus is more closely on the question of "why make art," and on the role which art as a whole plays in the culture. This focus permits a level of cross-cultural comparison of philosophical issues which may be difficult to achieve when looking more closely at particular meaning systems within a culture.

YARN PAINTINGS AS AN ETHNIC ART

While yarn paintings are made by Huichol artists, there is another side to the equation. The paintings are made for sale to non-Huichol buyers, and so the paintings evolved as an art-form within a commercial context; thus, an analysis of the aesthetic values they contain must take account of their commercial purpose, and the artists' efforts to modify their paintings to make them saleable to western buyers.

Art which is produced within a context of cross-cultural contact has been called "art of acculturation," "art of ethnicity," "tourist art," "airport or souvenir art," "ethnic art," and "Fourth World art," (Graburn 1969:465; Graburn 1976:1-5; Svensson 1988). In the not-too-distant past, "primitive art" was also used to refer to the arts of non-industrialized societies, while the term "folk art," which originally referred to the art of peasant groups within stratified industrial societies, has come to be used for many of these arts as well.

For various reasons, many of these terms seem unsuitable for this study. The terms "art of acculturation" and "Fourth World art" emphasize the art-form's role as a colonized culture's attempt to accommodate itself to a colonizing society; and suggest a specific model of how these arts are produced which may not be applicable in all cases. "Arts of ethnicity" (Svensson 1988:330) emphasizes the role these arts may play as boundary maintenance mechanisms, which demarcate a colonized culture's sense of internal cultural identity in relation to a dominant nationality. "Souvenir, tourist, or airport art" suggest a more limited market than such arts may have. "Primitive art" is a term which has fallen into disrepute because of its pejorative connotations. "Folk art" is still widely used, but should probably be reserved for its original meaning of producing societies which share a more or less common culture with the national society. For these reasons, I will use the more neutral term "ethnic art" in this study to refer to art produced by a small-scale society, usually within a context of colonial domination.

Ethnic arts are made by traditional or small-scale societies, generally for sale to western or industrialized nations. They may be sold to tourists who visit the producing nation, or the art may be distributed in the international art market. Often ethnic arts use manufacturing techniques, materials, subjects, or designs which are traditional within the small-scale culture; however, usually they have been modified in some way to make them attractive and saleable to the people who buy them. Graburn (1976) documents many examples of ethnic arts around the world, such as Eskimo soapstone carvings and prints, Navaho sand painting on board, and Australian aboriginal bark paintings.

Graburn (1976:6) defines Huichol Indian yarn paintings as an ethnic art; and classifies them as a "commercial fine art" which he defines as "pseudo-traditional arts...because, although they are made with eventual sale in mind, they adhere to culturally embedded aesthetic and formal standards." While retaining many features of a traditional art made by a small-scale society for its own use, yarn paintings are intended mainly for non-Huichol consumers. Yarn paintings are sold to Mexicans, for whom they have become a popular symbol of Mexican identity [3], as well as to western dealers and tourists, especially from regions such as North America, Europe, and Japan.

Yarn paintings are not made for sale to Huichols. I have never seen or heard of yarn paintings being sold to a Huichol for personal use, although I have seen instances of a Huichol middleman buying for resale. In this way, the art of yarn painting is quite unlike other Huichol arts, such as weaving, beadwork, or embroidery, which I have seen sold by Huichols to each other for personal use [4].

Graburn (1969:458) was perhaps the first anthropologist to recognize the ethnographic value of ethnic arts; he points out that although many traditional cultures produced arts and crafts for sale, it was common in anthropological and artistic circles to consider these arts as "'impure', commercial and somehow unfit for serious study." He characterizes this point of view as reminiscent of the previous generation of researchers who looked for the "untouched native," before the advent of acculturation studies in the 1920s and 1930s.

Graburn (1976) counters that ethnic arts can be a source of a considerable amount of information about the culture itself and about the processes of change within it. Ethnic arts may reveal what aesthetic ideas are peripheral to the culture, so that they are easily changed; and what aesthetic values are so central to the culture that people will not change them at all. In order to determine this relative importance, one must look at how the art began and developed; what factors influenced its development; and what functions it serves in both the producing and the consuming cultures. Such a study includes the socio-economic factors influencing the development of the art; and taking a historical perspective, traces the roots of the art and how it evolved over time.

Anderson (1990:235-6) affirms Graburn's assessment of the analytical value of ethnic arts, and calls for more research on the neglected area of the "aesthetic peri-evolution" of ethnic arts. Anderson feels it is particularly important to look at the abstract, philosophical principles that underlie art within the culture, and how these may change as a result of contact. He notes (1990:234) that a consistent pattern in colonial situations is for the colonized culture "to eventually discard the sophisticated systems of aesthetic thought they once possessed and adopt more commercially pragmatic, materially utilitarian and aesthetically superficial values." Technical skill tends to become more important than the religious thought or philosophy underlying the work; market value becomes the dominant standard.

Research on the process by which a religious art changes to a commercial one reveals some common themes which are relevant to Huichol yarn paintings. In a study of Haida argillite carving, Kaufmann (1976:65-67) suggests that the depiction and sale of religious themes indicated an acute breakdown in the culture. While the religion was widely practiced, religious themes could not be portrayed. Only after the arts had lost both ceremonial and social signficance could they be made for sale.

Parezo (1983:22) makes a similar point in her study of Navaho sand paintings. In order for the paintings to be made commercially, they had to be taken out of a religious context; and technical innovation was needed to transform them from a temporary, easily erased form to a permanent one. This process took about sixty years because of opposition from the Navaho ceremonial singers; the final compromise was to alter the sand painting figures slightly so they did not duplicate the ceremonial paintings.

The relative importance of the art form to the culture may also be a factor. In a comparative study of Pueblo and Navaho weaving, Kent (1976:97-101) notes that weaving was peripheral to Navaho culture, and so could be easily abandoned for better ways of making money. It was a late addition; and while western buyers thought it had spiritual meaning, the Navahos did not. In contrast, weaving was "locked into" Pueblo culture; certain textiles and designs had important social and symbolic meanings. Thus, Pueblo weaving was highly resistant to change; and continued to be made mainly for Pueblo markets.

These studies suggest the range of solutions which cultures may adopt in response to pressures to commercialize their religious arts; from complete refusal to sell, through modifying the figures, to unrestricted freedom to sell once the religion had lost its force. All three cultures restricted the sale of arts which had ongoing religious importance. The studies suggest that as acculturation pressures become intense and traditional values are eroded, formerly religious objects will be used in non-religious contexts including commercial art. One question this study will examine is how the Huichols have resolved this problem in regard to yarn painting.

This study will ask whether the yarn paintings retain a sophisticated aesthetic system which reflects traditional Huichol culture; or whether these values have broken down, and technical skill has become primary. If the aesthetic values reflected in the yarn paintings have changed, I will look at how this change may have happened and what direction the changes have taken.

GLOBAL AWARENESS

Ethnic arts are the product of the interaction of cultures; thus they may manifest aspects of the value systems of both producing and consuming cultures. This aspect of cross-cultural aesthetics is important to remember as we move into a new understanding of global communications and the movements of people and ideas around the world.

There is a tendency at times in anthropology to seek the antiquarian--to give the impression that only the traditional culture matters, and that the role of the anthropologist is to salvage the native world of 100 or 200 years ago (Marcus and Fischer 1986:1). In Huichol studies, much writing has tended towards the antiquarian, whether intentionally or not; perhaps the traditional culture has drawn a disproportionate amount of attention because it is so picturesque, complex, and interesting. This perspective gives the impression that Huichols still live a very traditional lifestyle; and in some ways this perspective remains valid, but it neglects the complexity of the world today.

Appadurai (1991:201) tells an ironic story of going to India to visit a former anthropological consultant, a temple priest, only to find that the priest had moved to an ashram in Houston, Texas. He uses this incident to highlight the need for anthropologists to work in what he calls the “real” world, in which there are global movements of people and imaginations across national boundaries. He calls for an anthropology that deals with these global movements, seeing and describing them clearly, rather than relying on its old stock in trade, "sightings of the savage" (Appadurai 1991:209).

I find Appadurai's warning an important caution in considering Huichol art in the modern day. Huichol Indians and western enthusiasts of their culture are engaged in a complex marketing arrangement, which is easily equal to the importing of East Indian gurus to Houston. Advertisements for westerners to visit Huichol villages and sacred sites appear in a California magazine called *Shaman's Drum*; in turn, the Huichol artists and shamans tour the United States and Europe [5]. The romantic image of Huichol shamanism, and the tourist setting in which it takes place, is exemplified in this excerpt from an advertisement promoting a seminar with Huichol elders in Mexico:

> This is an extraordinary opportunity to experience Huichol Indian Shamanism, Healing and Ceremonial Celebration. This Thanksgiving, join shamans doña Josefa Medrano and Brant Secunda at a beautiful villa only footsteps away from the Pacific Ocean near Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Learn Huichol shamanic practices of health and healing and how to bring the power and joy of this ancient wisdom into our modern lives (Dance of the Deer Foundation 1994)

It is easy to be sceptical of this marketing of traditional cultures, and to deplore the phenomenon; however, I believe that the western interest in this type of activity can be as fascinating to the anthropologist as the Huichol shamanism itself; and that there is a great deal to be learned about western religious longings from watching the interactions of Huichols and westerners.

While Mexicans do not seem to take part in the sacred site tourist phenomenon, they too express a series of images about the Huichol as exemplifying the mystical, Indian past of *La Raza* (Sp: the Mexican people). Since the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917, the Mexicans have been engaged in an effort to redefine a unique Mexican identity, drawing on the Aztec past. D.H. Lawrence's (1926) novel, *The Plumed Serpent*, is a brilliant literary evocation of this project--human sacrifice and all; interestingly, Lawrence wrote his novel in 1923 during a two-month stay at Lake Chapala, Jalisco, which is a Huichol sacred site; and I suspect that some of his descriptions of native dance may have been based on watching the Huichols. Friedlander (1975) describes an organization dedicated to re-establishing the Aztec past among Mexico City intellectuals in the 1960s, and the bemused efforts of Nahuatl villagers (descendants of the Aztecs) to accommodate the sudden interest in their language and culture.

The Huichols are seen in Mexico as epitomizing this mystical, magical past; in fact, *místico* and *mágico* are two words often applied to Huichols in Mexico, and a Mexican-owned gallery specializing in Huichol art reflects these adjectives in its name, *Arte Mágico Huichol*. This Mexican version of the romantic image of the Huichol is marketed in books and exhibits in Mexico; an excerpt from a popular book by a Mexican writer who participated in a Huichol pilgrimage highlights all of these themes.

> I was searching in the sea of esoteric knowledge, for occult understanding...of that other reality. Now I am doing the same thing, by entering into the magical world of the Huichols, that ethnic community, that Mexican Indian nation, descending directly from the Aztecs, which still lives on, and which makes us remember with its culture and its ancestral magic (Blanco Labra 1991:11; my translation).

In turn, Huichols have their own images of westerners, perhaps partly built up through the type of contacts they have experienced; for example, in one Huichol community I frequently received proposals of marriage from young Huichol men who wanted me to marry them and take them to the United States. Their expectation seemed to come from the fact that the anthropologist Susana Eger Valadez had married a Huichol from this community, and provided the men with a model of this kind of future.

Huichol art itself may reflect the results of cross-cultural contact. I met some Huichol artists who have visited museums displaying arts of the ancient Mexicans, including their own ancestors from Nayarit and Jalisco. It is quite possible that the artists are incorporating some of what they have seen in museums back into their yarn paintings.

This complex of images and counter-images is swirling around the field of Huichol shamanism and Huichol art. The art does not exist in a cultural vacuum, or in some pristine past, or even in a sort of Redfieldian "folk-art" present, with somewhat acculturated villagers turning out folkloric productions for sale in a metropole; rather I would suggest that there are complex negotiations about identity and esoteric knowledge being played out from both directions, indigenous and western. The Huichol artists are actors and players in this field, as much as the gallery owners and dealers who market the art, and the consumers who buy it; and perhaps, the anthropologists like myself who write about it.

THE SHAMAN AND SHAMANIC VISION IN YARN PAINTINGS

Within the framework of aesthetic analysis of an ethnic art, a second subtheme was clarifying the extent to which shamanic abilities play a part in yarn paintings. This question reflects a long-standing debate in the Huichol literature about whether yarn paintings are a product of shamanic vision.

The terms "shaman" and "shamanism" have a long history in anthropology. They describe a phenomenon which appears to be widespread across cultures; however, the definition of what exactly a shaman is and does remains somewhat vexing. Some authors, such as Eliade (1964:4), have used Siberian shamanism as the basic model for their definition of shamanic practice. Eliade defined shamanism as a core set of practices such as ecstatic trance, together with a set of common beliefs in events such as dismemberment and mounting the World Tree. Grim (1983:22) criticizes Eliade's focus on ecstatic trance as being overly limited, since not all shamans may use this method. Bean and Vane (1978:118) conclude that while Eliade's definition is "useful as a guideline, it is considerably more restrictive" than most authors now prefer to be. One solution to this problem is to use a term such as "traditional healer" which refers more to the function of the shaman within society as a curer. However, this consideration is problematic, since it may include types of healers such as herbalists or midwives whose methods do not involve interaction with the supernatural. In Canada, some indigenous people are particularly uncomfortable with the word "shaman," feeling that it connotes a deceiver or trickster; the word "elder" is often more acceptable in Canadian indigenous communities. I use the term "shaman" here in order to be comparable with general anthropological practice; however, I also acknowledge the difficulties inherent in the term.

The problems which authors experience in defining shamanism seem similar to those which have long plagued people who have tried to define "art," and for some of the same reasons. It appears that there is a wide range of practices used by shamans (and artists) across many cultures, with certain common features that overlap (Forth 1991); however, there may be few aspects which can be unequivocally identified as central in all cultures. Anderson (1990:238-240) settles on a minimalist, "open" cross-cultural definition of art, which defines art by the common properties which seem to distinguish "art" from "non-art," such as the use of skill, a sensuous affecting medium, and the encoding of culturally significant meaning. Perhaps by using the same type of minimalist definition which distinguishes the shaman from the "non-shaman", I can arrive at a satisfactory definition. Core shamanic properties seem to be the ability to perceive or contact the spirit world, and to communicate with entities encountered there; together with the ability to convey the results of this communication to other members of the shaman's society; in effect, to act as an intermediary capable of two-way communication.

One of the ways that shamans use to communicate their visionary experience is to describe the contents of their visions; shamans have used a variety of means, including songs, dance, mime, and painted images. Anthropologists have collected a considerable body of literature documenting these themes, and illustrating the types of images shamans say they have experienced. (Atkinson 1989; Blodgett 1978; Eliade 1964; Furst 1974; Halifax 1982)

In order to investigate the use of shamanic vision in Huichol yarn paintings, the terminology needs clarification; in particular, whether there is a difference between shamanic art generally and the art of shamanic vision. This distinction seems an important one for research purposes. Shamanic art I define as art which is concerned with shamanic themes or subjects. It may or may not be produced by shamans. In contrast, the art of shamanic vision is art which depicts what shamans say they themselves have seen in visions or dreams. If an anthropologist asks a consultant to draw a picture of his or her vision, that is art of shamanic vision; but a study of design motifs such as the World Tree, which is concerned with common experiences documented for shamans, is shamanic art. The important difference here is that the art of shamanic vision is a first-hand account; it is the individual's most direct statement of what she or he saw, and only one step removed from the actual vision itself[6].

It seems to me that in the literature, these two categories have often been conflated, and that some of the controversy which surrounds yarn painting may arise from the conflation; for example, as I will demonstrate, yarn paintings are clearly shamanic art, since they depict many themes and topics of Huichol shamanism. However, few yarn paintings represent actual visions experienced by the artist; some are visionary, but the majority are not. This conflation has resulted in a debate between those who argue that the yarn paintings represent visions, and those who say they do not.

The Huichol have a general term, *mara'a kame*, for the person an anthropologist might call a shaman; but they often translate it in Spanish as *cantador* (Sp: singer), rather than *chamán* (Sp: shaman). They also have a variety of Huichol terms for different types of shamanic practice, such as curing, sorcery, or recovering the souls of ancestors (Negrín 1986:29). Here I will refer to the visionary processes; in Chapter Three, I will discuss other functions of the *mara'a kame*.

An essential qualification to become a *mara'a kame* in Huichol culture is visionary ability: the ability to see into the world of the gods, to communicate directly with gods and spirits, and to influence them through prayer and ritual. Nonetheless, in my observation of Huichols, shamanic vision appears to be a graduated ability; that is, there are steps or degrees of visionary ability, and different forms which vision may take. Some people have the ability to see as though with their eyes on the spiritual level. Some can see only with the help of peyote, while others can see independently of this assistance. Some people can see all the time; and some can only see in certain circumstances, such as in a ceremony when the *mara'a kame* helps by opening the door to the other world. Some people have the ability to hear what the spirits are saying, again with the same qualifications as with seeing. Some perceive through other means, such as thought (apprehending an idea without actually visualizing or hearing it), or through dreams.

Vision alone does not make a person a *mara'a kame*, although it indicates certain talents in this direction. I know of one person who is consistently visionary, yet who is not considered a *mara'a kame* because he lacks the courage to act on what he knows; Benitez (1975:84) notes a similar limitation on an aspiring *mara'a kame* who lacked the necessary boldness and self-confidence. Another limitation is completeness of knowledge; as one man said to me, "I can see what a person has, [that is, what disease they suffer from], but knowing what to do about it, that is another matter." Some people have certain visionary abilities and a limited ability to exercise these abilities and to heal; however, even these individuals must complete themselves through a prescribed period of commitment and training before they are considered ready to be called a *mara'a kame*. The final choice of whether a person will be accepted as a *mara'a kame* is up to the spirits, since the person may complete all the ritual requirements and still fail to be accepted.

These qualifications are important to understand in relation to Huichol shamanism and the discussion which follows. They indicate that visionary ability and shamanic ability are neither simple nor absolute--an all or nothing thing--in Huichol culture. There are degrees and shades of ability, which vary according to the individual and over time. As I discuss different yarn painters, it will be seen that these degrees of ability come into play.

The idea that dreams and visions can be, and ideally, are a source of inspiration in Huichol art has been documented by several researchers. Furst (1968-9) first wrote about dreams and visions as a source of inspiration for yarn paintings in relation to a series of yarn paintings made by the Huichol artist Ramón Medina Silva. Furst makes no claims that Ramón considered his vision-inspired paintings better than his other works, but simply states that Ramón had reported dreams or visions as the source of his imagery. Subsequently, Susan Eger (who married the yarn painter, Mariano Valadez [7]) and Collings (1978) wrote that some women's embroidery and weaving was better than others, and that following a path of completion similar to that of a *mara'a kame* was the reason for the difference. A caption in this article identifies "Embroidery...inspired by the artist's dreams and hallucinations....The women who have "completed themselves" in the Huichol religion seem to have the most success in creating these patterns" (Eger and Collings 1978:47). The authors highlight the important role of visions, particularly those induced through the use of peyote:

> Through the process of her initiation to and continued ingestions of peyote, the completed woman also develops the ability to "dream" her designs and remember them. Striking colour combinations and hallucinatory geometric forms are typical examples of these dream creations. Variations on traditional designs, with enhanced feeling for form, composition and highly saturated colors also typify the work of the women possessing these divinely inspired talents (Eger and Collings 1978:52).

Eger and Collings do add that such women are not the only ones who make excellent artwork, and that many Huichols are highly skilled artists; rather "the difference ...is a whole level of existence ... particularly obvious in regard to the symbolism, which ordinary women who have not completed themselves are fairly oblivious to" (Eger and Collings 1978:52).

Schaefer (1990:225-246) reiterates the role of dreams and visions in relation to women's weaving. She notes that the woman who has completed herself will see through her heart, called *iyari* in Huichol; and will receive and originate designs from many sources, including dreams, peyote visions, and seeing designs in nature such as the designs on the back of a lizard or a snake ally.

Eger Valadez, Collings, and Schaefer emphasize the important role of dreams and visions in Huichol art. Visions are not the only source of imagery, since many designs are transmitted from person to person by the ordinary methods of teaching and copying. However, dream and vision designs represent an aesthetic ideal in Huichol culture; the highest level to which an artist can aspire. Therefore, it is instructive to ask whether this aesthetic ideal has been transferred into yarn paintings.

Almost since the beginning of yarn painting as a commercial art, there has been a debate in the literature about whether the paintings are products of shamanic vision. In part, this debate is a variation on the questions Graburn tried to address and lay to rest in 1976 ; whether an ethnic art has ethnographic value, and whether the original aesthetic purposes and religious meaning of an art can be carried forward into a commercial context. However, the argument also points to a topic of considerable interest in its own right: the question of what shamanic vision is; and what we might be able to learn from an art-form such as yarn paintings about how shamans see or what they see.

Some authors maintain that the paintings are simply commercial merchandise, reproductions of symbols which originally had religious meaning within Huichol culture, but which have since lost any connection to their original purpose. Muller (1978:96) calls yarn paintings a "degeneration" of the original religious offerings. While he observes that the inspiration often came from Huichol mythology, and that the Huichols were capable of turning out artistic masterpieces given the right incentives, most paintings are mass-produced in cities; and have little original content.

Weigand (1981:17-20) expresses doubt about the usefulness of yarn paintings as a source of information about Huichol traditions because there has been considerable mixing of information from different communities in the urban environment where yarn paintings are produced, and because sometimes information contained in them is drawn from secondary sources. He cites the example of a yarn painting based on a myth published in a booklet. He adds that some painters are what he terms "professional Indians"; that is, Indians who make a living by presenting themselves as well-informed Huichols, and whom he considers to be rather unreliable sources of information. The paintings respond to the demands of the tourist market; and can be ordered according to the tourists' preferences, perhaps combining several myths, rather than having traditional meaning.

Perhaps most critical of the yarn paintings is Fernando Benítez, a Mexican journalist who is widely read and quoted in Mexico as a source of information on Indians including the Huichols. Benítez (n.d.:7) calls yarn paintings a falsification and an industry, completely unlike any other traditional Huichol art. He blames the anthropologist Peter Furst for inventing them while listening to the Huichol artist Ramón Medina singing his myths. Benítez claims that the cartoon-like paintings which resulted from this collaboration, such as Ramón's painting of dead souls in the underworld [8], look more like floating heads drawn by Walt Disney than any authentic indigenous art.

Benítez's criticisms should probably be read with caution. He is not trained as an anthropologist, but as a journalist; still his sensitive documentation of Huichol traditions remains some of the best writing on the culture (Furst 1972:144-145). Moreover, as an ardent Mexican nationalist, Benítez (1970:285) deplores the fact that most writing about Mexican Indians was done by foreign anthropologists. Benítez is one of the main authors many Mexicans read for information on the Huichol; therefore his criticism carries weight, at least in Mexico, and was repeated to me by various Mexicans. As such, it is worth investigating further.

On the other hand, some writers claim that yarn paintings can be an important source of information about Huichol religion. Negrín (cited in Manzanilla n.d.:124) agrees that the yarn paintings sold commercially are often of poor quality, reproducing designs which once had magical and symbolic significance, but which have been deprived of their significance in a context of economic survival and commercial exploitation. Nevertheless, Negrín proposes that the best of the artists can create original designs, based on mythology and recording their personal visions; however, such masters are rare, and need to practice their religion in their personal lives.

> To keep in his spirit the vitality of this mythology, to feel it genuinely, and sense the urgency of recreating its images which weigh on his mind, the Huichol artist must live out the reality of his cultural beliefs and record his always changing visions, concentrating his attention on the ritual path of difficult pilgrimages and dramatic celebrations of his traditions. (Negrín cited in Manzanilla n.d.:124; my translation)

These opposing points of view suggest an interesting problem. What exactly are the Huichol artists depicting in their yarn paintings? Are the paintings a source of information about religious beliefs; and even more, are they depictions of actual dreams and visions? Or are they simply commercial products, albeit lovely, containing no more than sterile repetitions of once authentic myths and symbols? If they are a source of information about religion, what do they tell us? The Huichols bring an ancient Mesoamerican culture forward into the modern world. What can we learn from the yarn paintings about Huichol philosophies and beliefs? The Huichols still retain many practicing shamans, who work to cure the sick, and communicate with the gods. As yarn paintings are said to be the product of shamanic vision, perhaps they can tell us something about how shamans perceive the visionary world which they alone can see?

This study is organized in the following way. Chapter Two describes my methodology, and how the data were collected. It discusses concerns such as sampling procedures, how the artists were contacted and interviewed, the types of questions asked, and problems and limitations in the data. Chapter Three sets the context. It introduces Huichol culture and religion, and describes the origins and development of commercial yarn painting. Chapter Four introduces some artists, and recapitulates the history of the art from the artists' point of view. It addresses questions such as who the artists are, how they are recruited, and what motivates them to create yarn paintings.

Chapter Five shifts focus from the artists to the paintings themselves. It analyzes the content of the paintings, including their subject matter and designs, the type of imagery used in the paintings, and the styles of representation and composition. Chapter Six is a formal analysis of the art, looking more closely at technical questions such as materials, methods of manufacture, and use of colour. The goal of these two chapters is to determine how the yarn paintings manifest aesthetic standards of the culture in formal properties and imagery. Chapter Seven examines the related question of how the buyers may influence the artists' choices of subject matter and manufacture. Since yarn paintings are made for an external market, this market may modify the artists' aesthetic choices.

Chapter Eight examines a fundamental concept in Huichol aesthetics: the relationship between the artist and the gods. This examination encompasses the question of shamanic vision in yarn painting; but extends beyond it to look at Huichol concepts of the body and soul, and the process of envisioning generally. Soul concepts underly artistic production, the shamanic curing complex, and the cosmology of the Huichols; and draw these seemingly disparate areas together.

Chapter Nine summarizes the aesthetic values discovered for the Huichol through an examination of the yarn paintings. It suggests that, while the yarn paintings are a recent commercial innovation, they continue to manifest traditional aesthetic values.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

[1] The caption in Berrin (1978:123) identifies the Deer-person in this painting as Our Elder Mother Deer; but Lupe explained it to me as a representation of *Tamatsi Kauyumari*. These differing explanations may simply represent variations on a theme, since the Deer-god has many names and manifestations in Huichol mythology. Moreover, I suspect that the same yarn painting may be used to explain different concepts, depending on the artist's wishes; for example, in Chapter Five, I document an explanation which Lupe gave me of another yarn painting by Ramón Medina which also differs from a previously published explanation.

[2] There has been some discussion in the literature about whether *Kieri* refers to *Datura*, sometimes called Jimsonweed, or to another species of *Solandra*. Both types of plants are hallucinogenic and are related. Some Huichols seem to have called *Kieri* beneficial and others have called it evil (Schaefer 1990:145). Furst (1989) clarifies this discussion, after interviewing Guadelupe de la Cruz Ríos; she told him that the evil plant is *Datura inoxia*, properly called *Kierixra* in Huichol.

[3] Nancy Erikson, Gallery Olinala, personal communication.

[4] I have occasionally seen one Huichol buy crafts such as beadwork, embroidery, or weaving from another; it is usually unmarried men buying because they do not have a wife to make these items, or because they lack the skills to make the item themselves.

[5] Eger Valadez (1986c) addresses the selling of Huichol culture to western tourists, and points out the potential harm such tourists may cause in the mountain communities; however, not all Huichols are unwilling participants in this tourist phenomenon.

[6] As with any definition, one immediately runs into grey areas here. What, for example, does one make of art when the person who had the vision directs someone else to make the painting? I would say that if the person who had the vision supervises and corrects the painting, it is his or her vision, and therefore art of

shamanic vision; but if the painter operates independently of the person who had the vision, it is simply shamanic art.

[7] For the sake of consistency, I will use a single name Susana Eger Valadez. She has written under both her maiden and married names, and used both Susan and Susana.

[8] For an illustration of this painting, see Furst (1968-69:20) or Furst and Nahmad (1972:n.p.).

CHAPTER 2
FIELD EXPERIENCE AND METHODOLOGY

I first met the Huichols in August 1988. Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos (Lupe), the widow of the yarn painter Ramón Medina Silva, and members of her family were touring Canada on a cultural exchange. I met them in the village of Wakefield, Quebec; and they invited me to visit them in Mexico that December. Since then, I have visited them every year for periods of up to a month; and they have stayed at my house in Canada several times. I have accompanied them on pilgrimages to various sacred sites, including the pilgrimage to *Wirikuta*, the desert north of San Luis Potosí.

At first my interest was purely personal. I had graduated with a B.A. in Anthropology in 1971, and an M.A. in Cross-Cultural Education in 1978. For almost twenty years, I worked as a consultant doing anthropological research and organizational development. Much of my professional research, especially in the 1970s, was on applied anthropological issues such as indigenous education or indigenous people in the criminal justice systems (MacLean 1972, 1973, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1981); therefore, it was not unusual to be interested in indigenous culture in Mexico. However, I became fascinated by Huichol culture and religion; and wanted to understand it within a more formal structure. In 1990, I decided to do a doctorate in anthropology; I looked for a compatible supervisor who had field experience working with indigenous shamans, and who had an open-minded approach to their capabilities. I found these qualities in Professor David Young of the University of Alberta who had worked with the Cree healer Russell Willier (Young, Ingram, and Swartz 1989).

I entered the University of Alberta in 1991. By fall of 1993, I was ready to begin formal fieldwork. By this time, I had already spent about eight months' time over the course of five years with one Huichol family, learned Spanish, and had a good basic understanding of Huichol daily life and ceremonial practice. Thus, I was prepared to undertake a broader study, by visiting a number of families and different communities.

My interest in yarn paintings followed naturally from my first contacts with the Huichols. Lupe was one of the founders of modern yarn painting; while she no longer does yarn paintings, some members of her family still paint in her style. I watched her family painting, and noticed more paintings in Tepic and the tourist shops in Puerto Vallarta. What I saw whetted my desire to learn more. The paintings seemed to be a fascinating mix of brilliant colours, and exotic symbols; yet at the same time, they seemed curiously opaque. While they apparently had spiritual significance, according to small stories written on the back, their meaning was often obscure. What were yarn paintings saying, and what could they tell us about Huichol beliefs and spirituality? I decided to focus my research on answering these questions.

Yarn paintings had a particular advantage as a research focus in that they are a relatively unthreatening way of relating Huichol religious concepts. The Huichols produce the paintings for sale to the public, and put many of their religious beliefs into them. The artists always appear quite proud of their paintings and keen to explain them. Thus, as a researcher, I was more likely to find people eager to talk to me than if I proposed to discuss religious lore directly.

I concentrated on commercial yarn paintings because they are a public art. I did not want to study or publish information on the sacred offerings which are the predecessors of yarn paintings, because of ethical concerns which are discussed below. Therefore, while I refer to the religious offerings from time to time, I did not try to collect much information about them nor did I try to photograph or collect examples of these offerings.

The research strategy I adopted was a mixture of participant observation and a survey approach. This combination allowed me to collect qualitative data as it might emerge spontaneously in day to day life, while at the same time aiming for some of the precision and comparability of a survey.

My first step was to draft an initial set of questions and hypotheses (MacLean 1991). I was able to be precise in my questions because of the amount of time I had already spent with a Huichol family. I certainly would not have been able to be this specific on my first trip into the field. In fact, in my first visits, I had no idea what the Huichols were like, what I would find, or even what the questions were; therefore, I went with an almost totally open mind. It was only after I had spent a considerable amount of time immersed in Huichol culture that I was able to use a more rigorous method.

Then I conducted a pre-test to see if my questions were appropriate. Pre-testing allows one to determine if the general strategy is feasible, and if the questions elicit the kinds of answers one expects. I have always found that a pre-test is an essential step in any type of questionnaire-based research; even testing with several people uncovers questions which people misunderstand or find incomprehensible. I have also found that some of the best research questions are elicited during the pre-test when I ask the consultants of the research what questions they think should be included.

So with questions in hand, I went to Mexico for two weeks in October 1992, to ask Lupe's family what they thought of my research plans. I took with me some photographs of yarn paintings, since I was considering using a research strategy called photo-elicitation, showing Huichols photographs of yarn paintings, and asking them to interpret them [1]. I quickly found out that I needed to revise my method. The family told me, in no uncertain terms, that I was asking the wrong questions.

Domingo González, an elder of the family, told me that I could not ask them to interpret another artist's work. I should ask only the original artist to say what the painting meant. Chavelo González, a younger artist in the family, was willing to risk identifying what individual symbols or figures might mean; however, he too insisted that only the original artist could say what the combination of figures signified.

This gave me one valuable piece of information; a component of Huichol aesthetics is that only the person who makes the painting can interpret its meaning. Meaning is thus a personal quality of art; and may vary from one person to another, depending on his or her source of inspiration. Some anthropologists conclude flexibility in interpreting symbols may be true of other forms of indigenous art as well; Halpin (1994) argues that the Boasian paradigm, attributing fixed meaning to symbols used in Northwest Coast art, may be incorrect.

With this information, I went home to rethink my research methods. The family's reaction made it clear that I must find the painters themselves and ask them to interpret their own work to me. It was not enough to assume that the meaning and designs of yarn painting were common knowledge within Huichol culture. Moreover, since I was interested in investigating whether the painters were using their own visions as the source of designs, it was essential to put the painters together with their own paintings.

Over the next year, I revised the set of questions and variables; then refined them to produce an interview schedule of about fifteen questions, reproduced in Appendix Two. I intended that this schedule would form the basis of interviews with the artists, and provide some comparability of data. At the same time, it was general and open-ended enough that new questions could be added, depending on what the artists might want to talk about.

With the generous assistance of the Mexican government, I was able to spend about six months in Mexico from November 1993 to April 1994. My first task was to find both painters and paintings, and persuade the painters to talk to me. I wanted to interview a representative range of painters, rather than confine my study to one family or a single community. Other than that, I was not selective in my sampling technique. I would talk to any artist who would talk to me.

In order to obtain a representative sampling, I also wanted to interview painters from a range of locations, from urban to remote Sierra. This goal was ambitious, given the short time available. Finding painters proved harder than I had expected. To begin with, there are considerable practical problems. Huichol artists live scattered throughout towns, villages, and mountainous Sierra; they do not have telephones, and often are travelling to other places, either to visit relatives, attend a fiesta, or sell their paintings. I could travel for hours, or even days, looking for an artist, only to be told he had just left and was expected back next week. If I found the artist, sometimes he would have no paintings, having just sold them all or left them at his *rancho* (Sp: isolated farm or homestead) a day's walk away. Finding artists and putting them together with their paintings proved harder than I first thought.

I finally solved the problem by approaching wholesale dealers, stores, and galleries in Puerto Vallarta, one of the main markets for Huichol art; and asking to photograph all the paintings they had. In almost all cases, the dealers generously made their collections available for research. With photographs in hand, I could then discuss the paintings with the artists when I found them. Finding the artists became easier as they learned who I was; and began to invite me to visit their houses, and to tell me when they would be there.

Further examples of yarn paintings were gathered from books, museums, and exhibition catalogues. To date, I have collected about 500 examples, including my own photographs and published materials: this collection represents about 75 artists. I looked at many more paintings in shops; but did not photograph all the paintings I saw for reasons such as poor quality, repetitive content, or lack of information about the artist or the painting.

From the collection of paintings gathered for the research, I have selected a limited number of photographs to illustrate this study. These paintings are numbered and given a title, if they do not have one. I have generally given a long, descriptive title to help guide readers about the meaning of the paintings; if no text was available to describe the meaning, I have assigned a short title based on appearance.

The criteria for selecting these examples were mainly pragmatic. I wanted to pick as broad and representative a sample as possible. Therefore, I picked examples from each period or decade of yarn painting, from the 1960s onward. I wanted to represent major "schools" or families of artists; however, there may be some artists for whom I do not have examples of paintings. I particularly wanted to include paintings by artists interviewed for this study, so that readers might use the artists' verbal statements to deepen an understanding of their paintings.

In order to facilitate understanding of the paintings and their markets, I have adopted categories based on Parezo's (1983:164-170) study of Navaho sand paintings, another ethnic art. Parezo's categories use a combination of criteria, including price, technique, and originality of design. The lowest end of the market she calls the "souvenir" market; paintings sold at this level are small--ranging from 5 cm x 5 cm to 20 cm x 20 cm--and often show only a single figure. The artists can mass-produce up to sixty paintings a day, using stencils and the cheapest colours. The paintings cost from $2 U.S. to $15 U.S., and are often purchased by tourists as momentos or souvenirs. The intermediate level of the market is the "gift and home decoration" market; at this level, the paintings are larger, use better colours, and have more figures and detail. The artists can make as many as five a day. Prices range from $16 U.S. to $150 U.S. The highest level she calls the "fine art" market. These are large elaborate paintings, often full-scale reproductions of the ceremonial sand paintings. These paintings do not use stencils, and can take days or weeks to make. The prices reflect the better workmanship, and range from $150 U.S. to $3,200 U.S.

Parezo's categories are useful to understand the yarn painting market, and will be used here with a few modifications. Evidently, prices may have changed due to inflation since Parezo's study; also her prices are based on a single market--the retail market in the United States. I found greater variability in pricing for Huichol yarn paintings, since paintings were sold in both U.S. dollars and Mexican pesos, at wholesale prices charged by the artists and retail levels. Moreover, retail stores in Mexico might charge half the price that a store in the United States would charge. Therefore, I have not attempted to use price as a principal criterion, although it does provide a rough indicator of value. I have quoted all prices in U.S. dollars in order to make them comparable; where necessary I converted pesos to dollars at the rate prevailing in January 1994 which was 3 new pesos to the U.S. dollar. Other criteria, such as sizes and methods of manufacture, are described comprehensively in Chapter Six.

I will use the term souvenir or folk art paintings to refer to yarn paintings which are small, under about 30 cm x 30 cm; the paintings are often unsigned, or if they are signed, the artist is not well-known. An experienced artist might be able to produce one or two paintings of this type a day. Prices might range from about $5 U.S. to $50 U.S. One does not see souvenir paintings like those which Parezo described, made with stencils and produced at a rate of sixty paintings a day. Even the simplest yarn paintings use freehand designs, even when they depict a single figure; and the comparatively time-consuming method of pressing the yarn ensures that the artists cannot make more than a few a day.

The gift and home decoration market describes the mid-range of the market. At this level, the paintings are larger, ranging from about 30 cm x 30 cm up to 60 cm x 60 cm; and the designs more elaborate. Paintings take from about one day to a week to make, depending on yarn thickness and the amount of detail. The artist usually signs the painting, and the dealers usually know something about who the artists are. Some artists are quite well-known among dealers, and buyers may request paintings by the particular artist. Other artists are shadowy figures, and the dealers know little more about them than their names or community of origin. Paintings in the mid-range usually sell from about $50 U.S. up to $1,000 U.S.

The fine art market is the upper range. It includes paintings by artists who have become famous in their own right; these artists may have had personal gallery exhibitions, and toured other countries. Their paintings are usually of very high quality, both in design and workmanship; and their styles are often copied by their own apprentices and other artists. This category also includes very large elaborate paintings, such as those made for museums or institutions. The paintings in this category are often large, ranging from 60 cm x 60 cm up to several metres in length. The prices range from about $500 U.S. up to $10,000 U.S. or more.

Discovering the artist of a painting is not always a straightforward matter. Huichols often use variations of their names when signing a painting; for example, the following signatures were represented in one collection (Knox and Maud 1980): Guadalupe Barajaz de la Cruz, Lirma Guadalupe Barojo de la Cruz, Guadalupe Baroja del Naranjo, Lirma Guadalupe Baroja del Naranjo. It is probable that all these signatures refer to the same person, but it is sometimes necessary to make an assumption.

A related problem is that the person who signs a painting or sells it is not always the person who made it. Sometimes a wife makes the painting, but gives it to her husband to sign and sell. Sometimes the actual artist asks another Huichol to sell it, and the vendor is the one who signs it. Usually these cases can be identified when one has a good collection of a particular individual's work, and can compare painting styles to signers. Often an artist will have what is almost a recognizable trademark or style when painting a particular item, such as a peyote or a bird; however, it helps to watch while the work is actually being done, or have some paintings whose circumstance of manufacture is clearly known. The samples can then be compared to other works to determine who the artist might be. This flexibility about signatures introduces an additional methodological problem to the research, since one must always exercise caution before attributing a painting to a particular artist.

As an aside, many Huichols seem to see nothing wrong with the practice of one person making the painting and another signing it. As far as they are concerned, signatures have little meaning. Some artists who are more familiar with the western art world may understand the importance of signatures in western eyes; for example, the artist José Benítez Sánchez and his apprentices seem to sign their works separately. However, other artists seem to sign the work their wives or apprentices do.

Perhaps unwittingly, some dealers foster the practice of one person making art while another signs it. Some dealers consider Huichol art to be "folk art," which they define as anonymous. They do not want to buy signed paintings; therefore Huichols often take their paintings to market unsigned, and ask at the time of sale whether the dealer wants it signed. If the dealer wants a signature, and the seller is not the real artist, the seller's name may still end up on the work.

Since I was interested in the relationship between the painters and their paintings, I tried wherever possible to photograph examples which could be clearly attributed to particular artists. I photographed all the signed paintings that I could find, but I photographed unsigned paintings only if they seemed particularly interesting. Therefore, my sample is biased towards the gift and fine art markets, the upper end of the art market, because these dealers are more interested in well-known artists. I was less interested in the souvenir and folk art market, such as paintings which are sold in volume to large dealers such as FONART, the Mexican government craft stores; paintings sold in these stores tend to be cheaper, unsigned, and lacking written explanations; usually the sales staff know little about the paintings or the artists. Sometimes the quality of the folk art paintings was poor and repetitive; but sometimes quite good paintings were sold this way.

My preference for paintings that I could link to artists tended to bias the sample of artists I was developing. There may be dozens or even hundreds of Huichols who occasionally do yarn paintings for sale in the souvenir and folk art market. There are relatively few artists working at the upper end of the market. As I interviewed dealers and galleries and looked at museum and exhibit collections, it became clear that the same names recurred over and over. I estimate this upper end of the Huichol art market at not more than about 100 artists; and of these, some are only part-time yarn painters.

Indeed, particular families seem to be the main yarn painting artists; and it is not uncommon to find one family with several members who are practicing artists. Some families develop distinctive styles, and one might almost say that they form "schools" of art. In addition, Mariano and Susana Valadez run an actual school in their Huichol Center in Santiago Ixcuintla; and artists who worked with them often paint in a style like Mariano Valadez. I will discuss these families and styles in more detail below; here I am addressing only the methodological implications.

The number of yarn painters is also affected by changes in the market for Huichol arts. Many artists are switching to beadwork, which has recently become very popular in the United States market. All types of beads are in vogue right now [2]; and Huichol beadwork, with its complex patterns and exotic and mystical connotations, fits into this trend. For at least a decade, a few beaded items made by Huichols have been popular--mainly beaded bowls, snakes, and jaguar heads [3]. Now the dealers and the artists are straining their ingenuity to invent new items for the Huichol artists to bead; I have seen beaded masks carved by Indians from Michoacán, as well as practically every animal one can think of--including beaded elephants! Plate 37 shows an example of Huichol beadwork, a modern clay sculpture in pre-Columbian style with beadwork by a talented sixteen-year old artist, Higinio Bautista Bautista.

This trend implies that yarn painting is almost becoming "old fashioned," or at least a preserve for specialists. I found that most yarn artists I interviewed have been painting for at least ten to twenty years; I met few younger artists who prefer to do yarn painting. The artists consider beadwork quicker to make and better paid. Ten or twenty years ago, many young Huichols learned to do yarn painting because it was one of the main money-making crafts available to them. Now beadwork is taking over that role. While there undoubtedly will continue to be a market for yarn painting, it may be mainly in the gift and fine art markets. If this trend continues, then in the future yarn painting may become a preserve of an even more limited number of specialists.

In the six months I was in Mexico, I met about twenty Huichol artists. This is almost certainly a representative sampling of the population of Huichol artists who do yarn paintings. The artists ranged in age from about 22 to 76. Most were specialists in yarn painting; several were primarily bead artists, who said they could do yarn painting if someone would commission them to. Eighteen were men, and two were women. Their communities of origin represent the range of Huichol communities: two were from Santa Catarina; two from San Sebastián; eleven were from San Andrés; one was from Amatlán de Jora; and five were from Huichol settlements in and around Tepic.

In doing the research, I adopted some of the techniques of a survey approach, such as trying to gather a representative sample of the artists and using an interview schedule. However, with a traditional culture such as the Huichols, it is almost impossible to do research which meets the strict criteria of standardized interviewing or controlled sampling. For example, one cannot draw a random sample from a population when no one is sure even of the number of Huichols there are. Nor can one use questionnaires or controlled interview techniques; some people simply will not answer. That one needs to be flexible in one's research methods will, of course, come as no surprise to anthropologists.

Some artists allowed me to interview them formally, asking a standardized set of questions. One even asked to see the questions in advance, as did several of the Huichol government officials in San Andrés. Where possible, I tape-recorded the interviews; but I always gave artists the choice of using tapes or not. Five artists allowed me to record the interviews; these tended to be older men who had had a good deal of experience with western buyers. Others were uncomfortable with tapes, and so I relied on taking notes. Some were uncomfortable with a formal "interview" in which I asked fixed questions, but were willing to sit and chat with me. While similar types of information might emerge over time, the format of the questions was not constant.

I have generally found that Huichols have a limited tolerance for questions, especially on more serious or spiritual matters. While they will often spontaneously volunteer information, the learner can only ask a few questions before they begin to get impatient. Some of this resistance may be due to an often-noted native preference for learners to watch and observe rather than question; some may be due to suspicion or caution in a country like Mexico, where people do not volunteer information easily to strangers, and where, only sixty years ago, Huichols were killed for their non-Christian beliefs [4]. Therefore, I generally prefer to limit my questions and spend most of my time watching. However, I found that if I made a prior appointment and then came back to do the interview, some artists were more patient since they had mentally prepared themselves for questions.

Most formal interviews lasted about one to two hours, with an average of about one and a half hours; the artists tended to tire if the interviews were longer. Informal interviews, such as daily visits to an artist's home to chat, could go on for days or weeks.

All interviews with the artists were conducted in Spanish. While I have a limited vocabulary of Huichol, I do not regard it as sufficient to express complex concepts. In all cases, the artists I spoke to were fluent in Spanish; and so language did not seem to be a limitation on the research. I have the somewhat unusual experience of having mainly learned Spanish among the Huichol Indians; thus I am, in fact, most comfortable with their accent and sometimes idiosyncratic use of the language. Interviews with American and European dealers were done in English. Interviews with Mexicans were done in Spanish or English, according to their preference.

A principal goal of this study has been to record statements of Huichol yarn painters about their art. Darnell (1992:45-46) suggests that recording texts may be one of anthropology's most lasting contributions. Some indigenous people in Canada (Ignace et al 1993) agree that recording the knowledge of elders may be one of the most valuable roles anthropologists can play in relation to indigenous societies because indigenous people may not have the training to do this, or because they may be preoccupied by pressing issues such as political and social problems [5].

This perspective was echoed by some of the Huichol artists I interviewed, who told me that it was one reason why they participated in the study. As Chavelo González said, his children are now attending Mexican schools where they learn from books. They do not have an opportunity to learn about their culture in the same way he did. He wanted to make sure that what he knew was written down, so they could read it if they wanted to in the future.

Up to now, yarn painting has been regarded as a commercial and ephemeral art-form; thus, there is little record of the artists, or their beliefs about their art. Only three artists have been documented in any depth: Ramón Medina, José Benítez Sánchez, and Mariano Valadez. There is some urgency to record these texts. Some of the founders of this art, such as Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos, are now elderly and unwell. If we are to have a record of the lives and beliefs of these elders for future generations, now is the time. While other founders of yarn painting are still middle-aged and healthy, there is still a concern because Huichol culture is changing rapidly; young people are now attending Mexican schools, and western culture is expanding its influence into the mountains. In the next ten years, the foothills of the Huichol Sierra will become a major tourist destination comparable to Lake Mead in the United States. The Mexican government has just completed a huge dam--called the *Presa de Aguamilpa*--on the Santiago River, which runs through the foothills of the Huichol Sierra; the reservoir was filling while I was there. Huichol culture is also threatened by Protestant evangelists from the United States and Mexican Catholic missionaries who are gaining converts among the younger generation of Huichols [6].

The first generation of yarn painters, now in their forties or older, is the last generation of Huichols to grow up in remote communities without attending western schools. Their experience is different from that of those who will follow them; and while I believe that Huichol culture will almost certainly survive, it will not be what the older generation experienced.

In order to present a clear picture of the artists' world views, the ideal is to stay as close as possible to their own words and language. Therefore, much of the data I will present is English translations of my taped interviews conducted in Spanish, or summaries of my fieldnotes if the artists did not want to be taped. Texts which are exact transcriptions of my taped interviews are typed as dialogues, with each speaker identified. Texts which are summaries of fieldnotes, but not the artist's exact words, are identified as interview data, but reported in paragraph format.

Some elaboration, clarification, re-organizing of speech, and filling in of background was necessary to make this information comprehensible to readers. To understand many colloquial terms in Huicholized Spanish requires a long period of living with and participating in rituals with Huichols; without this experience, a literal translation of the interviews into English is very hard to understand. Therefore I have clarified ambiguous meanings with introductory explanations to the transcripts, and clarifications in square brackets within the texts.

Speakers are identified with the full names at the beginning of an excerpt, and subsequently with first names; this practice is not intended as disrespect to the artists, but rather follows the custom of how the artists are spoken of and known. Huichol practice does not emphasize surnames; in fact, many first received surnames from Mexican census-takers in 1895. Lumholtz (1902:v. 2, 98-99) comments that nearly half took the surname "de la Cruz (Sp: of the cross)" because of the religious significance of the five directions. So, in practice, a woman such Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos is always spoken of and known as Lupe or Doña Lupe, not as Señora de la Cruz. I will give the name in full the first time I use it; then subsequently use the person's first name. If using the name after a substantial gap in the text, or if there is likely to be confusion between different individuals with the same name, I will again write the name in full.

Surnames are written here according to Mexican practice, with the father's father's name, followed by the mother's father's name. Women usually keep their surnames after marriage; however, they can adopt their husband's surnames, using "de". For example, Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos could be called Guadalupe de la Cruz de Medina after marrying Ramón Medina Silva.

In general, I found a considerable difference in the artists' depth of insight or maturity of thought, depending on the age of the artist. Younger artists, in their early twenties, tended to give brief and superficial answers to certain questions, particularly those dealing with religious concepts. In contrast, men in their thirties and forties gave much fuller expression to these concepts; some commented that they had not thought much about these issues when they were young; but that after educating themselves in their traditions, beginning to undertake *cargos* (Sp: community obligations) or going on pilgrimages, they had begun to understand the deeper meanings of yarn paintings. For most complete details, the older people in their sixties and seventies were best. This correlation of age with maturity of thought bears out the native tradition that elders are the best exponents of religious information.

The types of questions the artists could answer also reveal a significant difference between western and Huichol thought. I found that the artists were comfortable with any question dealing with concrete facts, such as when they began yarn painting, or what materials they used. They were also comfortable expressing concepts through symbols, such as explaining what a *nierika* is--a symbol which will be fully explained in Chapter Eight. In contrast, the artists experienced difficulty answering questions about psychological or emotional states.

The interview schedule included several questions about perceptions such as why the artists thought westerners buy Huichol art, and whether the artists wanted to teach westerners about Huichol culture through yarn paintings. Then, while in the field, I read a book on heuristic research (Moustakas 1990), a methodology which emphasizes exploring consultants' emotional responses to activities; it inspired me to add some questions about the artists' emotional perceptions of their work. I quickly ran into trouble; for example, I tried a series of questions about how the artists "feel" while doing yarn paintings, what they think of the artistic process, and so on. Among most western artists, this line of questioning would inspire an outpouring of observations about their emotions, reminiscences, or mental processes; according to Anderson (1990:211-216), expression of feeling or emotion is a fundamental aesthetic value in western art; hence our artists are well-trained to express their personal impressions. Similarly, most western models of psychotherapy require that people be able to think about what their feelings are, and express them at some length to other people.

To my surprise, questions of this type met with a blank face and a look of absolute incomprehension among the Huichol artists. It was more than not understanding the words, since the artists clearly understood the words I was using. It was a complete inability to understand the purpose of the question and what kind of response might be called for. The typical response is summed up by one artist. When he finally understood what I meant when I asked him how he "felt" doing his art, he looked at me in disbelief; and, in a voice of scorn, said, "*Pues...bien*! (Sp: Well...[I feel] fine!)" and had no more to say on what he obviously considered a foolish question [7].

I tried rephrasing the questions in different ways, or using examples to illustrate, but these efforts met with the same response. Sometimes, after several rephrasings, an artist might begin to comprehend the purpose of a question, such as why he or she thought westerners liked Huichol art. From the artists' reactions, I realized that this question requires a double level of abstraction--consideration of both their own states of mind and that of the buyers. Most artists merely replied that they had never thought about it. Their typical answer was, "I don't know why they buy our art, but I'm glad they do, because it is a service to us financially and allows us to preserve our culture." Evidently, this response deals more with practical issues than the emotional or speculative question of why people buy art.

This problem was so pervasive in the interviews that I began to realize that it diagnosed a major difference between the western mind-set and that of the Huichols. While the Huichols certainly are aware of emotional states, they may not be very interested in why other people think a certain way, or what their own or other people's emotions are. In contrast, western society (particularly middle-class society and women) places an enormous amount of time and attention on speculation about one's own and other's feelings. Western psychotherapy is built on discussing emotions; and popular psychology books and television talk shows are a multi-million dollar industry predicated on emotions. The Huichols' lack of interest in discussing emotions emphasizes the contrast with western society; and it is a reminder to western researchers that we need to understand the cultural assumptions that form the underpinning of our research questions.

The Huichols' lack of interest in emotional states may also be reflected in shamanic practices of treatment and diagnosis. When a Huichol *mara'a kame* is called in to treat a patient, the patient may not be asked to say much at all. The *mara'a kame* is expected to diagnose the trouble through visionary means; and not necessarily to have the patient tell him or her what the illness may be [8].

The difference in regard to feelings about making art is also diagnostic of a difference between western models of aesthetics and Huichol models. As noted above, expressing feelings or emotions is a primary aesthetic purpose of western art; hence, western preferences for hearing artists express their feelings about making art. However, it seems that expressing their feelings is not a priority in Huichol aesthetics.

I did not pay any consultants to talk to me. Only two artists refused an interview because I would not pay them; both wanted me to sign a contract to take them on tour to Canada. I sometimes offered to buy a yarn painting or some beadwork, especially if I felt that money was an issue; however, even small yarn paintings may cost several hundred dollars U.S, well beyond the budget of the Ph.D.

student on a grant. Most artists did not seem interested in payment, and made clear that they felt participating in my study would benefit them in other ways. Huichol artists tend to be aware of the fact that publicity is good for business; they hoped that I would make them, as artists, and their paintings better-known. Several artists thanked me for my work, and said they felt it was a service to the artists. While I was not able to pay artists individually, I believe that a field-worker has an obligation to repay the community as a whole for the substantial help the community gives; therefore, I offered to work with Huichol education officials on a book about yarn paintings for their schools. They felt such a book would be helpful.

The anonymity of consultants is a further concern. Some anthropologists use pseudonyms to protect their consultants' privacy. On the other hand, there is a long tradition in anthropology of using actual names in association with biographies of individuals, and especially of public figures such as artists or politicians (Langness 1975; Liberty 1978). In Canada, some anthropologists and their indigenous consultants believe that concealing identities is a disservice to indigenous communities, who have a right to have their own history recorded and to know who is the source of information told to the anthropologist; some communities insist upon holding copyright in the name of the individual or the community (Cruikshank 1993:137-141). Anonymity is considered to be one of the ways anthropologists have retained power over information. Even setting aside questions of ownership of knowledge, there are other reasons for not concealing identities. Atkinson (1989:xiv) chose to use real names because of the delight that the Wana took in seeing research done forty years earlier, based on interviews with their elders. In many small communities, the people know exactly which family the anthropologist has been visiting; and will readily tell anyone who comes and asks (Brizinski 1993:158). For whose benefit, then, is the anthropologist concealing the name?

In addition, I feel that prematurely subsuming an individual's voice in a group statement which takes a form such as "the Huichol believe..." leads to a misunderstanding of data; this is a general problem in the discipline of anthropology, which has been willing to make generalizations on the basis of information collected from small numbers of consultants (MacLean 1992c). It is not a group which believes or thinks a certain thing, and expresses it to the anthropologist, but an individual. It may be true that there are generally held group beliefs, and that the individual is typical of the group; but he or she may equally well be unique

(Cruikshank 1993:135). Concealing names and identities contributes to this fallacious picture of the anonymous indigenous consultant, who can speak for all members of the group.

While the question of anonymity is a difficult one, I believe that the balance falls in the direction of using actual names wherever possible. Evidently, if there is any potential physical or legal danger to consultants, a pseudonym should be used. Similarly, if the consultant asks to remain anonymous, this wish should be respected. However, if there is no danger, other factors come into play.

In this study, some artists clearly participated because they felt it would help them to be better-known. They wanted to be identified with their art-work and with their statements; as artist David González Sánchez said after seeing my collection of photographs, "The only ones missing are mine!" and he urged me to include him. Many artists' paintings are easily recognized by their style; it would not be productive to try to conceal the artist's name. Therefore, I have used actual names whenever I felt I had clear permission to use them. This included texts which were taped, and fieldnotes of interviews when I had explained in advance that I would be using the material for research. I have generally not associated names with statements if I am citing casual comments made in conversation or material that was observed in daily life. Nor have I used names or cited material if other cues indicated that the individuals did not want to be quoted; for example, a number of artists told me about visionary experiences, but with eyes lowered or heads turned to one side, or at night in hushed voices during conversation around a campfire. These non-verbal cues indicated that the statement was given in confidence; and I did not want to force the issue by asking permission to publish.

In addition to artists, I also interviewed people associated with Huichol art, including wholesale dealers, who buy for resale in the United States or Europe; gallery owners; government officials who were responsible for promoting Huichol art; and officials of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista. A total of twenty-nine dealers and nine officials were interviewed. I talked to anthropologists who had worked with the Huichols, including Marina Anguiano, Jesús Jauregui, Denis Lemaistre, Susana Eger Valadez, and Paul Liffman.

From time to time, I refer to the non-Huichol world which serves as a market for yarn paintings. Yarn paintings are mainly sold in the western world, in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Mexico itself. There also appears to be a small market in

Japan, according to some dealers and artists. Because the purchasers are mainly from northern industrialized countries including Japan, I refer to them with the term, "western" world or "western" buyers.

Perhaps in every piece of research, luck and serendipity play a part. For me, one of the most fortunate events was an invitation to attend a Huichol political meeting in the Sierra. This event proved to be an excellent method of introducing my study, being "seen and screened" by the Huichol political and religious leaders, and introduced to the "real-politick" of modern Mexican Indians. A few words are in order about this organization and its meeting.

The Instituto Nacional Indigenista is working with Huichol leaders to develop a political organization called the Union de Comunidades Indigenas Huicholes (UCIH)-Jalisco. It has an elected president, and an assembly composed of delegates appointed by the traditional governors of the Huichol communities. The traditional religious structure of shamans and temple officers has been incorporated into the organizational chart as committees of *vigilancia* (Sp: security) in charge of overseeing safety and security in the Sierra [9]. This organization appears to be a complex balance between a modern democratic organization and a traditional native government system.

The president of this association, Guadalupe de la Cruz Carrillo, invited me to attend one of its founding meetings in January, 1994; and to address the assembly about my study. The meeting was held at Nueva Colonia, in the Santa Catarina district; and about 650 delegates attended. This group appeared to be most of the senior male leadership out of a nation of some 10-20,000 people. I presented my proposed study, and received a loud round of applause from the delegates. From comments made to me later, I concluded that this reception had as much to do with the fact I was a woman who stayed up until midnight in the freezing cold to speak to them as to any intrinsic merit in what I said. Perhaps more important for my research was the fact that I was seen by, and formally presented to, most of the male leaders in the Sierra; this introduction helped to open doors later on.

ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Perhaps every anthropologist encounters ethical dilemmas. The American Anthropological Association has even published a handbook on ethical dilemmas and suggested solutions (Cassell and Jacobs 1987). In Canada, the ethical problems of fieldwork have become acute. Indigenous people are politically powerful in Canada, and are increasingly distrustful of traditional anthropological research. There has been strong criticism of anthropologists for stealing indigenous people's stories (Keeshig-Tobias 1990); for short-term research which gives no benefit back to indigenous communities (Ignace et al 1993); and for prying into knowledge, especially religious matters, which the community wishes to keep confidential (McIvor 1990). As more indigenous people enter universities, and are trained in anthropology, they bring a unique perspective, both critical and constructive, to anthropologists who formerly saw indigenous people as subjects of research.

The Canadian perspective may have some valuable insights to offer anthropologists from other countries. The Canadian experience emphasizes that an indigenous person can be skilled, learned, sophisticated in the modern industrial world, and yet retain his or her culture, although it is sometimes an uneasy balance. We do not equate technology with culture; nor assume that because a person drives a car or uses a computer, they are no longer an indigenous person. This modern point of view is not generally held in Mexico; it was common to hear assertions that the Huichol artists are no longer "real" Huichols, because they are able to function in a modern market.

Coming from a country like Canada with an indigenous population which is politically powerful and increasingly sophisticated about research issues, I found myself faced with a number of ethical problems, as I tried to practice fieldwork in a more informal setting. Perhaps most acute was the issue of permission, particularly permission to write about religious information. I had become very close to the family of Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos, and a number of family members shared religious knowledge with me. They told me their dreams, and how to interpret them; gave me instruction in some shamanic practices; and took me to a variety of sacred sites. Much of this happened before I decided to return to University and write a Ph.D. thesis. Initially, several family members were concerned that I would betray confidences or write things which they did not want revealed.

One method the researcher might offer to overcome this concern is allowing the people to read a draft of the thesis and remove any material they do not want used. However, this method is very difficult to use when the people can read little, if at all; and any material has to be translated from English to Spanish, inevitably losing some of its connotations, while perhaps gaining others in the new language. My experience is that the people might sit still long enough to have one or two pages read to them; they would have little interest in hearing a lengthy Ph.D. thesis; nor would they understand many of the issues and ideas discussed in the thesis, since these relate more to academic and scientific discourse than to any issues of concern to them. This situation makes it very difficult to seek informed consent.

The issue seems to resolve itself as one of trust; they trust me not to misuse the information they have provided; and I have an obligation to respect this trust. However, this concern in turn can lead to self-censorship. Often I have no clear guidelines as to what I can or cannot say. I am faced with the dilemma of whether I err on the side of caution, or perhaps say too much. The dilemma creates a constant struggle.

Self-censorship also applies to my own writing about shamanism. It stems from a basic source. From time to time, I have shared in the Huichols' visions. At night, during a ceremony, I have seen the deer stand beside the fire, talking to the shaman. Sometimes I have heard voices talking; and later confirmed with the Huichols that a particular spirit was present, and was, in fact, saying the things I heard it say. Similarly, in 1990, I accompanied Lupe to Oka, Quebec, where Canadian soldiers were engaged in a confrontation with Mohawk Indians. While Lupe sang in a ceremony, I had a mental image of the deer dancing, kicking up with his feet. I cannot really call it a vision, since I "thought" it rather than "saw" it. Later I confirmed with her that the Deer-spirit was present and was kicking up dust to obscure the sight of the soldiers who encircled the Mohawk Indian town.

These experiences present me with a dilemma as a researcher. Do I say what I have seen or suppress it? Will I betray confidences made to me by the Huichols? I also open myself to severe criticism by some anthropologists who are deeply threatened or opposed to the possibility of visionary experiences (DeMille 1980; Long 1977). Ewing (1994:571) calls "believing in the world of the people they meet" one of the few remaining anthropological taboos. Traditionally, western science has striven for objectivity, by which is meant recording that which is visible, measurable, verifiable by others, and hopefully, replicable. Sharing one's consultant's visionary experiences may be none of these.

Yet I have found that my experience greatly enriches my understanding of the Huichols and their paintings. I know what a painting means if I have experienced it myself. I understand when a Huichol artist tells me, as Eligio Carrillo did, that he can tell what a painting means without having to ask; even when I do not know, I can begin to guess at the depths of experience an artist may be putting into the painting. It makes me a more insightful researcher than I otherwise would be.

LANGUAGE, TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

A number of different systems have been developed to transcribe the Huichol language. Lumholtz (1900, 1902) and Zingg (1938) both transcribed Huichol words as they heard them, using an English-based orthography. Diguet (1911) devised an orthography based on French. These systems are confusing because the authors worked among people from different parts of the Sierra who spoke different dialects of Huichol. The dialect differences are usually not identified, and the confusion is compounded by the different western orthographies used to transcribe the sounds. The first consistent system based on extensive field research was developed for the Summer Institute of Linguistics by McIntosh and Grimes (1954), and published as a Huichol-Spanish dictionary.

Since the 1980s, the Huichol themselves have been working on a transcription system for use in their schools in cooperation with linguists at the University of Guadalajara (Consejo Supremo Huichol 1990). Generally this system follows the orthography developed by McIntosh and Grimes; however, it differs in a few instances, mainly because of using a Spanish-influenced orthography rather than an English-based one; for example, instead of using the English "h" it uses the Spanish "j". It does not indicate glottal stops, which Grimes used at first, but later abandoned (Fikes 1985:4). It does use acute accents to indicate stress. This work appears to be ongoing; and there may be further changes as the orthography is refined. In general, I have followed the Huichol orthography wherever possible and assumed that it contains the most accurate rendering of the Huichol sounds. However, as no dictionary is yet available, I have supplemented it with the spellings found in McIntosh and Grimes.

According to Grimes (1964:13), there are three main dialects of Huichol: an eastern dialect spoken in Santa Catarina and San Sebastián; a central dialect spoken in San Andrés; and a western dialect. The dialects are distinguished by a few consistently occuring sound shifts, and by many variations in vocabulary. The principal difference in the sound system is a shift from the English sound "sh" (written with the Mexican "x") to "r" to "rr" (a hard rolled r). The Huichol orthography adopts the cumbersome convention of indicating the shift with two letters, "rx," leaving the choice of which way to pronounce it up to the reader. A second shift is from "r" to "l" to "rl" (pronounced like the English "charlie"). The Huichol orthography adopts the convention of writing this sound with an "r" even though many speakers say the word with an "l" or "rl." So, for example, the term *nierika* (Hui: face, mirror) may also be written and pronounced as *nielika*, or *hikuri* (Hui: peyote) as *hikuli*; these variations are commonly seen in the literature.

One sound, which Grimes (1964:13) calls a high back vowel, is found in Huichol but not in English; this sound may be pronounced as half-way between an "i" and a "u." In the Huichol orthography, it is written with the plus (+) sign on a typewriter keyboard, or with a special character using a small letter "i" with a horizontal bar through the stem. In order to make my transcription easier for English-speaking readers to understand, I have chosen the alternative method of writing this character as "ü". For the same reason, I have used the English "h" rather than the Spanish "j", as in *hikuri* rather than *jikuri*.

Throughout the text, the reader will find foreign words in both Spanish and Huichol. The English translations of the words are given in brackets; and the original language is indicated as Huichol (Hui:) or Spanish (Sp:), as in *corazón* (Sp: heart).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

[1] I am indebted to Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan of the University of Alberta, who allowed me to photograph their yarn painting collection for this purpose.

[2] Judith Anderson, personal communication.

[3] Huichol beaded objects are made using methods similar to those of yarn painting. The artist spreads wax on an object and applies beads to the wax, often using a long needle to place the beads. The objects may be made of wood, gourd shell, or even paper maché.

[4] The Cristero revolt, a Catholic-led counter-revolution, went on in the Huichol Sierra at least until the late 1930s (Rojas 1992:241-2). During this time, many Huichols were killed and Huichol villages abandoned.

[5] This role may be seen as controversial by some indigenous people, who feel that anthropologists have exploited more indigenous people than they have helped (Ignace et al. 1993:180-190).

[6] In Canada, it is common to criticize the role which the Christian churches played in destroying indigenous culture. In fact the criticism has been so severe that many of the mainstream churches, including the Catholic Church, have felt compelled to issue formal apologies to indigenous people for the damage that was done to them.

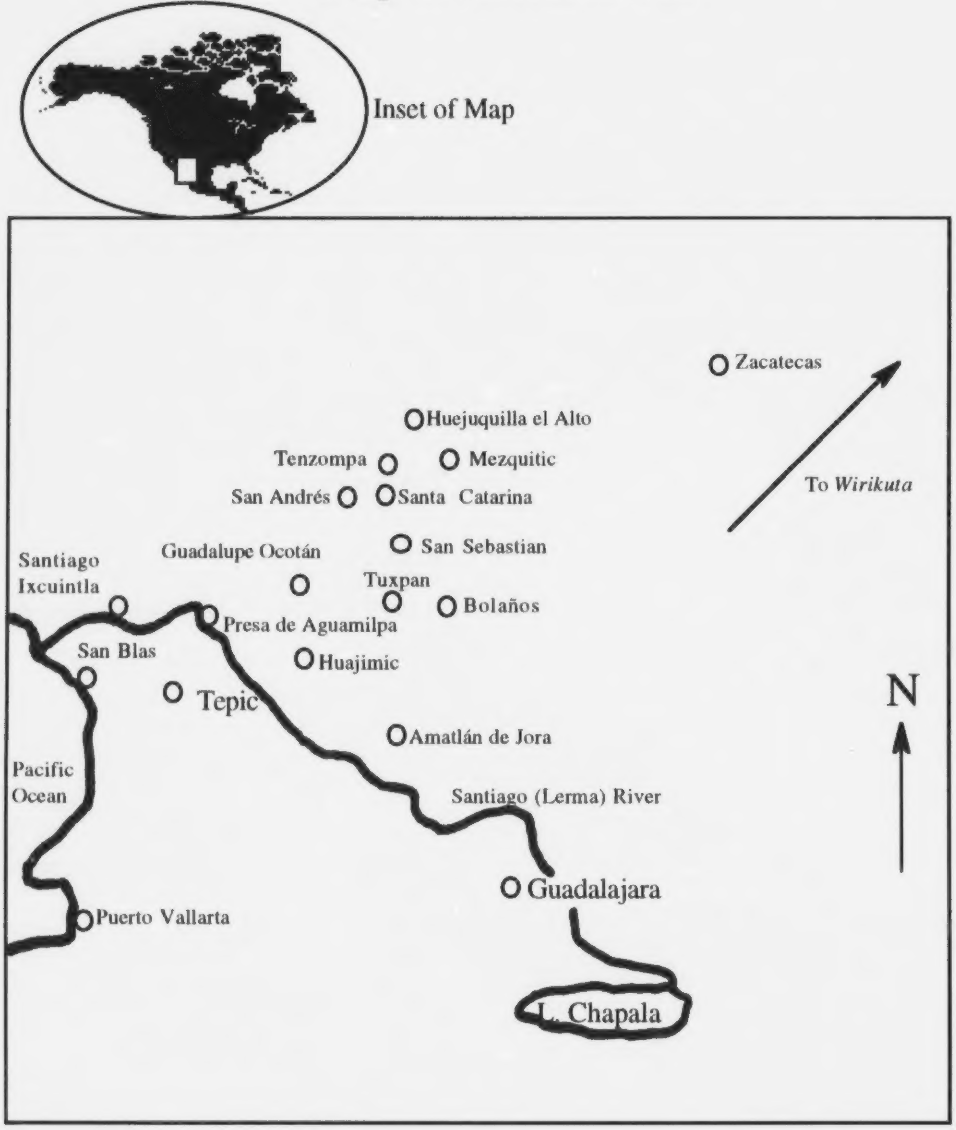
This negative view of the church's influence may not be shared by Huichols. I once offended an elderly *mara'a kame* and his family by suggesting the Catholic Church had not played a beneficial role among Indians. This family, and others I encountered, observed Catholic practices, such as fasting during Lent; and told me if I respected their beliefs, I should fast as well. When I asked why they followed Catholic practices, the son of the *mara'a kame* told me that it was because their elders had decided that the Christian church and the Huichol priests were really talking about the same ideas; there was no difference. Since the elders were much wiser than the present generation, the people today accept what they said and practice both ways.

[7] David Young points out that Japanese people have the same characteristic. His wife, who is Japanese, often finds herself at a loss when called upon to express feelings in conversation with North Americans. This is because in Japan the group is primary, and takes precedence over the individual's personal emotions. Therefore, people do not usually think much about their feelings, although they certainly experience emotions.

[8] I do not want to over-emphasize the one-sided nature of the *mara'a kame*'s diagnosis. While the *mara'a kame* is responsible for the diagnosis, I have also seen the family talk about the patient's problems to the *mara'a kame*; and sometimes, the patients volunteer information.

[9] Leopoldo López, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, personal communication.

Map of Huichol Area


Inset of Map
Zacatecas
Huejuquilla el Alto
Tenzompa
Mezquitic
San Andrés
Santa Catarina
To *Wirikuta*
Santiago Ixcuintla
Guadalupe Ocotán
San Sebastian
Tuxpan
Bolaños
Presa de Aguamilpa
San Blas
Huajimic
Tepic
N
Amatlán de Jora
Pacific Ocean
Santiago (Lerma) River
Guadalajara
Puerto Vallarta
L. Chapala

CHAPTER 3
HUICHOL INDIANS AND THEIR YARN PAINTINGS

The Huichol Indians (pronounced Wee-chol) live in the rugged western Sierra Madre mountains of northwest Mexico. They speak a Uto-Aztecan language (Grimes and Grimes 1962:104), and were estimated to number 8,000 people in the mid-1970s (Manzanilla n.d.:35) or 10,000 in 1981 (Weigand 1981:9) [1]. The Huichol's own political organization, the Union de Comunidades Indígenas Huicholes (Sp: the Union of Huichol Indigenous Communities), [2] now estimates their number to be as high as 18,000.

The Huichol presently live in the Mexican states of Jalisco and Nayarit. They inhabit a rugged chain of mountains called the western Sierra Madre, which runs north of the city of Guadalajara. The mountains are bordered in the east by the high central Mexican plateau; in the west, the mountains drop down towards the Pacific Ocean.

There are five main Huichol governing districts in the Sierra: San Andrés, Santa Catarina, San Sebastián, Tuxpan, and Guadalupe Ocotán; Weigand (1981:20). estimates that these five districts are further subdivided into about twenty temple districts. Weigand (1972:7-8) refers to the Sierra communities as the Chapalagana Huichol after the Chapalagana River which divides the western plateau of San Andrés from the eastern plateaus. There are also a number of Huichol communities on the western edge of the Sierra and in the foothills leading down to the city of Tepic, particularly along the Santiago River (also known as the Lerma River). This river runs northwest from Guadalajara through the Sierra to a point just north of Tepic; then it makes a sharp turn west and drops down out of the mountains towards the Pacific Ocean. The Chapalagana River is a tributary of the Santiago River. Huichols may have always lived in the foothill regions, since archival sources show these communities were probably populated with Huichols before the Spanish conquest and during the Spanish colonial era (Rojas 1992:12-15,22). In addition, a number of Huichols fled the Sierra during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17--a time of horrific violence and guerilla warfare, when Huichols were massacred by Mexican soldiers, according to stories told to me. These refugee families settled in the foothills, and many never returned to the Sierra. In this study, I have referred to the foothill communities as the Santiago Huichol, to distinguish them from the Chapalagana

Huichol.

These days, the Huichol farm corn, beans, and squash using slash and burn farming techniques, although agricultural chemicals are becoming increasingly common supplements. They also keep some cattle, goats, and sheep as well as donkeys, mules, and horses. Some anthropologists believe that the Huichol were originally a hunting and gathering people, whose transition to agriculture is still somewhat incomplete: hence the deer and deer hunting still hold a central place in Huichol ceremony and belief (Schaefer 1990:23). (For a contrary view, see Fikes 1985:48) [3]. In the winter, many Huichols commute to the Pacific coast of the state of Nayarit to work as agricultural labourers, planting tobacco, and picking fruit. This employment provides a substantial portion of their cash income. The sale of arts and crafts also supplements their cash income.

The Huichol managed to preserve their traditional religion during the Spanish colonial period. While they adopted some Christian practices such as *Semana Santa* (Sp: Easter Week) celebrations, in general their ceremonies remained aboriginal (Furst 1978:22). Today the Huichol retain many pre-Columbian traditions, including a shamanic curing complex. This conservatism makes them an excellent source for information which may have been lost or modified in other Mesoamerican societies.

Huichol religion is based on a pantheon of deities and spirits of nature, and expresses itself through an annual cycle of ceremonies and pilgrimages. While I will summarize some of the key concepts here, the most comprehensive descriptions of the religion as a whole may be found in the ethnographic works of Lumholtz (1900, 1902, 1904), Zingg (1938), Myerhoff (1968, 1974), Benítez (1968), Fikes (1985) and Schaefer (1990). Specific myths or ceremonies are described in Furst (1967, 1972), Furst and Myerhoff (1966), Furst and Anguiano (1976), and Anguiano (1974, 1976).

Huichol deities represent natural phenomena and animals (Lumholtz 1900:10-15). They may be personified as male or female; for example, important male deities are *Tatewari*, the Fire-god; *Tayau* [4], the Sun-god; and *Tamatsi Kauyumari*, the Deer-god and messenger of the gods. Female deities include *Takutsi Nakawe*, Grandmother Growth, goddess of creation and fertility; *Tatei Werika Uimari*, Young Mother Eagle Girl, who holds the world in her claws; *Tatei Yurianaka*, goddess of fertility and crops; and a host of goddesses of rain and water. Many of the latter goddesses are associated with particular springs or bodies of water, such as *Tatei*

Matinieri, a spring in the desert north of San Luis Potosí; *Tatei Rapawiyeme*, located in Lake Chapala south of Guadalajara [5]; and *Tatei Haramara*, the Pacific Ocean, with a special site at the town of San Blas, Nayarit. Indeed, most deities have shrines at particular locations. An important part of Huichol ceremonial life consists of making pilgrimages to the sites where deities have their homes, and leaving offerings there (Morvay 1989:42). If the site includes a spring or other source of water, the Huichols will bathe in it, drink it, and bring water back home to be used in ceremonies.

Perhaps the best-known Huichol religious practice is the pilgrimage to the desert north of San Luis Potosí, called *Wirikuta* in Huichol. Lumholtz (1902: v. 2,122-135) did not witness this pilgrimage, but was the first writer to describe it, using reports from Huichol participants. Since 1966, a number of western writers have taken part in this pilgrimage, including Benítez (1968); Mata Torres (n.d.); Myerhoff (1968, 1974); Furst (1972); Cox (1977:34-51); Blanco Labra (1991, 1992); in fact, the recent ***Millenium*** film series (Maybury-Lewis 1992) brought this once esoteric ritual into the living rooms of North America. This wide television distribution is one example of the marketing of Huichol culture in a global context.

The pilgrimage to *Wirikuta* is undertaken to recreate the world; to ensure that the sun continues to rise, and the rain to fall; and to ensure that people, animals, and crops enjoy good health. Part of the pilgrimage ceremony includes collecting and eating *hikuri*, the peyote cactus (*Lophophora williamsii*), an hallucinogenic cactus which grows in the desert of *Wirikuta* and which has the power to transform into deer and corn. The pilgrims may leave offerings at *Reunar*, the volcano which is the birthplace of the sun; and bring peyote and sacred water back with them for use in ceremonies which bring life to the people in their communities.

The Huichol also carry out a regular cycle of ceremonies in family *ranchos*, in the temples, and in the main ceremonial centres. Fikes (1985:167) lists the annual round of ceremonies, and correlates them with the solstices and equinoxes. A series of ceremonies throughout the year are concerned with the planting and harvesting of the corn, bean, and squash crops; and with maintaining health and fertility of the fields, animals, and people. Ceremonies are held when the fields are cleared; when the crop is sown; when the young corn is still green; when the corn is harvested; and when the corn is toasted, and prayers said for the next year's fertility.

In the main ceremonial centres in the Sierra, an additional round of community-wide ceremonies are practiced. These include Easter Ceremonies, such as

Fiesta de Pachitas (Sp: Ash Wednesday), Lent, and *Semana Santa* (Sp: Easter Week); and *Cambio de las Varas* (Sp: Changing of the Rods of Power), a ceremony changing the civil governors.

Huichol ceremonies are led by religious practitioners called *mara'a kame* (Hui: shaman or shaman-priest); the plural is *mara'a kate*. Most *mara'a kate* are men, although women may be *mara'a kate* as well. Formerly, this skill was widespread among Huichols; and Lumholtz (1900:6) commented that "every third person" was a *mara'a kame*. One still encounters many Huichol *mara'a kate*, both in the Sierra and in the cities.

Mara'a kate perform private healings within a family setting; they officiate at ceremonies to remove the effects of sorcery; they conduct a funeral ceremony five days after death; they act as senior priests in community-wide ceremonies at the ceremonial centres in the Huichol Sierra; and they select and superintend government officials in the Huichol communities in the Sierra.

People become *mara'a kate* in Huichol culture by making vows to certain deities, and fulfilling their obligations to the deities for a prescribed number of years. The words used in Spanish reflect the concept of payment; they refer to making a contract (Sp: *hacer un compromiso*) and making payment (Sp: *pagar la manda*). The idea of payment underlies the process of becoming a shaman, through arduous pilgrimages, fasting, offerings, and self-sacrifice. Until the vow is paid, the person is bound; failing to complete the required sacrifices may bring illness or death, or the person may be diverted to the dark world of sorcery. The emphasis which the Huichol place on service to the family, the community, and the world is important; becoming a *mara'a kame* is not something a person should do for self alone.

One way to become a *mara'a kame* is by making a prescribed number of pilgrimages to *Wirikuta*. It has been reported in the literature (Furst 1972:144; Myerhoff 1968:17) that five pilgrimages to *Wirikuta* are required to become a shaman. Based on what Lupe's family have told me, this may be a misunderstanding of Huichol flexibility; her family require six pilgrimages over a period of five years. The system of counting they use is like counting systems which count the first and last days of a time-period; for example, in Mexican Spanish, two weeks is called fifteen days. However, six pilgrimages is, in fact, a minimum number, and many Huichols have told me that more years--up to ten or twelve--are required. The longest period I have heard is twenty-five years; the shortest is three years, but this smaller requirement was to fulfill a pledge to a different place and deity. Thus there appears to be considerable variation in practice. It should also be noted that there are other ways to become a *mara'a kame* in Huichol culture; and that pilgrimage to *Wirikuta* is only one of the ways, albeit a very important one.

Artistic activity, through the making and decorating of many types of objects, is a central part of Huichol ceremonial life. Huichols make and leave offerings as a part of most ceremonies and pilgrimages. These objects are intended as a form of visual prayer to the gods. As Lumholtz (1902:v. 2, 200) explains, "The wishes of the supplicant are itemised in many ways, by colouring or carving or representation in or on textile fabrics, or else by attachment." Lumholtz (1900) describes and illustrates many objects made as offerings, including painted prayer arrows with tiny objects attached, which represent specific prayers to the gods; gourd bowls; flat wooden boards; and statues of deities or animals, carved in wood or stone. The bowls, boards, and statues are often decorated with beads and/or yarn which are glued to the object with beeswax. From these religious offerings has grown the modern art-form of yarn painting.

Commercial yarn paintings are a recent innovation in Huichol culture; as I will show, they appear to have begun in the 1950s. The most direct predecessors of the yarn paintings are small yarn paintings made as offerings or prayers to the gods; Berrin (1978:152-3) illustrates three such offerings, which were collected by Lumholtz in the 1890s and Zingg in the 1930s. However, there are a number of differences between these small offerings and the commercial paintings; for example, the religious offerings may be two-sided, whereas commercial yarn paintings are one-sided and designed to be hung on a wall. One can also see the roots of commercial yarn paintings in other votive objects such as god-disks, bowls, and even in the designs of weaving and embroidery.

Modern commercial yarn paintings are flat pictures. They are made by spreading a thin layer of beeswax on one side of a board, usually plywood or masonite; then pressing wool or acrylic yarn into the wax. Plate 13 shows an artist making a yarn painting. This technique of making yarn paintings appears to have originated with Huichol Indians, and is still used mainly by them [6].

Generally, when I refer to yarn paintings in the text, I mean the commercial paintings. When I speak of the religious offerings, which include yarn paintings, I will refer to them as offerings.

In English, the term "yarn painting" is used to describe this art form. Mexicans use several Spanish words to describe yarn paintings, depending on what aspects they wish to emphasize; the terms *cuadra* (Sp: picture), *cuadra de estambre* (Sp: wool painting), *tabla* (Sp: board), or *tabla de cera* (Sp: waxed board) all emphasize the materials. *Tabla votiva* (Sp: votive board) emphasizes the religious function.

When speaking Spanish, Huichol artists tend to use the Spanish word *cuadra*, although I have occasionally heard them use *tabla* or *pintura* (Sp: picture). In Huichol, the usual term for a yarn painting is *nierika* (Hui: face, eye, mirror, doorway to the world of the gods); this word refers to an important religious concept which is described in detail in Chapter Eight. One meaning of *nierika* is a depiction of the world of the gods, as though one were seeing into their world through a telescope, or watching the gods in one of the tiny round mirrors which Huichol *mara'a kate* often use. Thus, a yarn painting *nierika* is a painted version of the events seen through the mirror *nierika*.

A second word used to refer to yarn paintings is *itari* (Hui: bed, mat). Negrín (1979:25-26) defines *itari* as "a bed on which the ancestral gods come to rest and also a field that is prepared for...planting"; Zingg (1938:628) describes the *itari* as a stand or base for votive bowls or for the statues of deities. Its use in reference to yarn paintings connotes a flat decorated board which draws the gods to rest on it, so that they may read the prayers of the maker in the pictures depicted on the board.

According to Zingg (1938:629), Huichol mythology ascribes to yarn paintings the power of bringing into creation whatever is painted on them. Once painted, things "simply came to life, and the world knew them as real things, plants, animals, and the *santos*" (Sp: the saints). He cites a myth of the culture hero, *Kauyumari*, who made a yarn painting to bring animals into the world:

> *Kauyumáli* was painting prayers that he wished to be granted by the great gods. With beads and colored wool placed in the wax on the board, he painted a snake, a rattlesnake, a fish, a coyote, and a skunk....He also created the royal eagle (double-headed Hapsburg symbol), hawk, parrot, parrakeet...quail, 'tiger,' wolf, and a singing-shaman. All the animals, hens, turkeys, and everything else in all colors he painted. The colored rocks of the five points were represented in the painting.

THE START OF COMMERCIAL YARN PAINTING

Commercial yarn painting appears to have begun in the 1950s; however, records are sparse, and so it is difficult to determine exactly when and where the sacred art became a commercial one. Some sources attribute the change to a Mexican anthropologist, while others point to a Catholic priest. Since both men appear to have been active at about the same time in Guadalajara, it is possible that both played a part in the commercial development of the paintings.

According to Negrín (1979:26), a Mexican anthropologist named Alfonso Soto Soria was the first to exhibit and sell yarn paintings. Negrín states that "Yarn boards first appeared on the market in 1951, when Professor Alfonso Soto Soria held an exhibition of them in Guadalajara in Mexico." Nahmad (1972:157,162) notes that in 1954 the Museo Nacional de Artes e Industrias Populares mounted an exhibition on the Huichol, and dates the growth in popularity of Huichol arts from that time.

In the mid-1950s, Soto Soria was curating an exhibit on Huichol culture for the new Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. He collected a number of yarn paintings which are now in the Museum's collection. Some were purchased in Mezquitic; others may have been made on-site at the Museum. According to the Museum's archivist [7], Soto Soria brought Huichols from the Sierra to Mexico City to help construct the exhibits. Kamffer (1957:13), a Mexican theatrical director interested in Mexican history and culture, visited Soto Soria at the museum and saw several Huichols from San Andrés who were helping Soto Soria create the Museum's collection. One man was "sticking coloured yarn on a waxed board, designing a curious eagle with two heads, one normal and the other in the shape of a cross."

Next to take up the story was Peter Furst, an American anthropologist working in Guadalajara in the 1960s. Furst (1968-9:21) agrees that commercial yarn paintings originated in the 1950s, but emphasizes the role of Franciscan priest Ernesto Loera Ochoa. To help the Huichols support themselves, the priest sold their arts through the Basilica of Zapopan, a cathedral on the outskirts of Guadalajara which has a lengthy history of missionary work in the Sierra. In 1965, Loera introduced Furst and Barbara Myerhoff, a fellow anthropologist from U.C.L.A., to Huichol artist Ramón Medina Silva (Furst and Myerhoff 1966:3,7). Ramón had been living for about four years in Guadalajara, and selling yarn paintings through the Basilica and a government-sponsored store. Furst and Myerhoff began taping Huichol legends told by Ramón.

At this time, Ramón was making yarn paintings which depicted a single figure or a group of symbols, such as "deer, flowers, eagles, butterflies, snakes, sun, moon, clouds, trees" (Furst 1968-9:22). The paintings were mainly intended for decoration; Ramón called them *adornos* (Sp: ornaments). Furst (1978:26) comments that the paintings contained "authentically Huichol symbols," but that they had no particular narrative meaning; and that Ramón often made up improbable stories when the priest asked him to explain what the paintings meant. Ramón told the anthropologists that he obscured the meaning because the priest only wanted to learn about Huichol culture in order to change it (Furst and Myerhoff 1966:7). Yarn paintings that tell stories (as opposed to symbol collages) may have originated with a request by Furst that Ramón make paintings to illustrate the legends they were taping. Although Father Loera had already persuaded Ramon to make yarn paintings which depicted "the characters of Huichol ceremony or tradition," Furst (1968-9:22) maintains that Ramon continued to regard these paintings as purely decorative art, without sacred meaning.

In 1966, Furst and Myerhoff published the first article resulting from their collaboration with Ramón. This article analyzes a series of myths about *Datura*; and is illustrated with three paintings by Ramón showing how *Datura* lures the unwary into sorcery, and how it was vanquished by the Deer-god, *Tamatsi Kauyumari*. This article appears to be the first discussion of yarn paintings in the English literature [8].

Furst commissioned a collection of yarn paintings from Ramón on behalf of the U.C.L.A. Museum of Ethnic Arts. These paintings were exhibited, and are illustrated in a catalogue published by the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History (Furst 1968-69). The catalogue shows twenty paintings with associated texts. Furst's article from the catalogue was later translated into Spanish, and the same twenty pictures reprinted in the Mexican book, *Mitos y Arte Huicholes* (Furst and Nahmad 1972).

Furst and Myerhoff continued to record myths and legends dictated by Ramón, and accompanied him on a peyote hunt in 1966. Furst and his wife Dee accompanied Ramón on a second peyote hunt in 1968, and at that time made a film. The collaboration between the anthropologists and Ramón resulted in a considerable output of articles by both anthropologists, and one book (Myerhoff 1974).

Ramón lived in Guadalajara until the spring of 1967, when urban expansion overtook his small rancho and he decided to move back to the Sierra (Furst, 1967-

68:18); Furst (1978:30) says he was evicted from the land. Shortly after, Ramón met the Mexican journalist Fernando Benítez, and served as a principal consultant for a series of books Benítez was writing on Mexican Indians. In November 1967, Benítez received a telephone call from Salomón Nahmad Sittón, Director of the Cora-Huichol Centre of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista in Tepic, telling him that a good Huichol consultant had become available. Benítez (1968:353-382) writes that he immediately took a plane for Tepic, where he met Ramón. Ramón invited Benítez to a fiesta at his mother's rancho at Paso del Muerto along the Santiago River. Benítez' account of this rather unhappy visit sheds light on Ramón's character, expanding on Furst's [9] somewhat guarded references to Ramón's less than desirable qualities. Ramón had taken a second wife; and was spending his money literally on wine, women, and song, hiring Mexican musicians to play at the fiesta and drinking heavily. In the uproar, Lupe left him and moved to Tepic, resolving to start a school teaching crafts with several other women. However, shortly after, Benítez met the couple in Tepic, and commented that they were apparently reconciled.

Benítez (1968) devoted one volume of his five-volume series to the Huichol. Like Furst and Myerhoff, he relied heavily on Ramón for mythological information, although he accompanied a different group of Huichols on a peyote pilgrimage. Benítez comments that Ramón was a good informant, and he illustrated his book with three yarn paintings by Ramón (Benítez 1968:514,529,577).

By the mid-1960s, the Mexican government was taking notice of the yarn paintings and becoming interested in promoting them. Stromberg (1976:156) explains that the government began to take a more active role in promoting indigenous arts generally, especially the art of northern Guerrero and the Huichol, because their "somewhat psychedelic quality" was in harmony with the artistic theme of the Olympics, staged in Mexico City in 1968.

Perhaps because of the growing popularity of yarn paintings, there was concern about deteriorating quality. As early as 1968, Furst (1968-9:21) complained that much spurious Huichol art was appearing on the market, harming the Huichol economy and craftsmanship. Imitations of Huichol paintings were being sold, and some Huichol artists were then imitating the imitations. Moreover, unscrupulous entrepreneurs had introduced Walt Disney characters into Huichol art. This development was confirmed by a consultant [10] who told me that, at one time, the Huichols were making Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck yarn paintings. Another consultant showed me a yarn-painted version of a famous Che Guevara poster which was made in the late 1960s by a Huichol prisoner in Tepic.

The Instituto Nacional Indigenista undertook a project to preserve high quality and traditional workmanship in the yarn paintings. In order to encourage Ramón Medina to continue painting in the traditional style, the Institute in Tepic began to purchase and market much of his production (Furst 1968-9:21). The Institute also invited Ramón to move to Tepic in order to teach yarn painting to other Huichols, and Mexican anthropologist Miguel Palafox Vargas was appointed to supervise the new school.

In 1974 [11], the popular Mexican magazine *Artes de Mexico* published two issues on Huichol art and culture, written by Mexican Ramón Mata Torres, which may have stimulated even more interest in Huichol art. One issue contains a short article on commercial yarn paintings and the ceremonial artforms which precede them, as well as a number of illustrations of yarn paintings. Unfortunately, the artists of the paintings are not identified. Mata Torres (1980:31) notes that yarn paintings appear to have been exclusively an urban phenomenon, and that he saw only small religious paintings in the Sierra.

During the 1970s, commercial production of arts and crafts began in the Sierra. The impetus came from Plan HUICOT which opened the previously inaccessible Huichol Sierra to commercial development. Plan HUICOT is part of an even larger program known as Plan Lerma, conceived in the 1950s. Through Plan Lerma, the Mexican government proposes to develop the Santiago (or Lerma) River system, which includes several rivers draining the Huichol Sierra, such as the Chapalagana and Bolaños Rivers. The recently-completed dam, the Presa de Aguamilpa, which I described above is a part of this program.

Plan HUICOT was a massive effort by the Mexican government to bring modern services into the Sierra; it operated in the early to mid-1970s (Manzanilla n.d.). The name HUICOT is an acronym of Huichol, Cora, and Tepehuane, the three indigenous groups living in the Sierra. The government built an access road through the north end of the Sierra from Valparaíso to Ruiz, and put airstrips into a number of communities. The government also brought in services such as radio, electricity, and potable water systems, as well as schools and boarding dormitories, grocery stores, and agricultural instruction. There were some efforts to foster the production of commercial arts and crafts in the Sierra; however, such endeavours had a relatively low priority in Plan HUICOT [12].

Perhaps more influential was the increased ease of travel [13] in the Sierra, as well as the novelty of being able to visit there. FONART, the Mexican government craft marketing agency, began flying into the Sierra to purchase crafts. Some observers felt that this development led to a decline in quality of the crafts produced, because FONART purchased almost everything which was offered, regardless of quality. Several westerners who moved to San Andrés during this period also helped to make it a centre for the production of arts and crafts (Muller 1978:97); in particular, Peter Collings and Susana Eger Valadez encouraged the Huichols to do better quality work, supplied materials, and marketed the products.

With air or road transport, it became physically possible to make yarn paintings in the Sierra and ship them out. However, despite this possibility, it does not appear that many yarn paintings were actually made in the Sierra. Muller (1978:96) discusses government efforts to foster a commercial arts and crafts program, but notes that yarn paintings were seldom made in the Sierra because of the cost of moving heavy plywood. Even today, most artists do not try to make yarn paintings in the Sierra and carry them out [14]. The plywood is simply too heavy to carry in any quantity, and the paintings are too fragile; instead, the artists from the Sierra prefer to go to the city to make them. There they can buy wax, yarn, and sheets of plywood; make the paintings and sell them; then go back to the Sierra with needed cash or goods. Beadwork and fabric items, such as embroidery and weaving, are lighter to carry; and do tend to be made more in the Sierra.

The growing Mexican and international excitement about Huichol arts led to a number of museum and gallery exhibitions during the 1970s. In Mexico, Juan Negrín Fetter (1977, 1979, 1986) began a productive collaboration with the yarn painter José Benítez Sánchez which led to a number of exhibitions and several publications. According to Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos, José Benítez was a cousin of Ramón Medina, and first learned yarn painting with him. Negrín (1977) mounted an exhibition in Guadalajara: most of the works displayed were by José Benítez, but the exhibit included some paintings by three other Huichol artists: Tutukila (or Tiburcio Carrillo Carrillo in Spanish), Juan Ríos Martinez, and Guadalupe González Ríos. Further exhibitions were mounted in Mexico City and internationally [15]. Negrín (1986) reprints an essay on Huichol art written for an exhibition in Mexico City, and gives a detailed description of three yarn paintings by José Benítez Sánchez. These descriptions are longer than the short descriptions usually attached to yarn paintings; in them, Negrín and Benítez clearly try to present the deeper philosophical underpinnings of Huichol cosmology, and Benítez evolved a unique and recognizable style to express it visually.

In 1978-80, the Museums of Fine Arts in San Francisco sponsored a major touring exhibition of Huichol arts [16]. The catalogue for this exhibition, *Art of the Huichol Indians* (Berrin 1978), brings together most of the American researchers who worked with the Huichols in the 1960s and 1970s; and is the best source available for photographs of traditional and modern Huichol arts. Unfortunately, as Berrin (1978:14) explains, a decision was made not to illustrate many yarn paintings because they are not, in themselves, sacred objects used by the Huichols, although they do illustrate sacred stories or mythology.

The catalogue presents yarn paintings by five artists: Ramón Medina Silva, Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos, José Benítez Sánchez, Cresencio Pérez Robles, and Hakatemi [17]. Furst's article in it describes his personal experiences with Ramón Medina, and their collaboration in the development of yarn paintings. According to a pamphlet prepared for the exhibit (Berrin and Dreyfus n.d.), the yarn painter Mariano Valadez worked on site; and Susana Eger Valadez answered questions.

During the late 1970s, it appears that some smaller exhibits of Huichol art were organized, perhaps through local art galleries and museums. Several artists told me that they had participated in tours to the United States and Canada. There is little reference to these exhibits in the literature; I located one mimeographed catalogue of an exhibit held at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver in 1980 (Knox and Maud 1980).

In 1986, a second major exhibition of Huichol art was held in California at the San Diego Museum of Man in cooperation with the Huichol Center for Cultural Survival and Traditional Arts[18] established by Susana Eger and Mariano Valadez. The proceedings of a symposium held in conjunction were published in 1989 (Bernstein 1989:vi). Unfortunately, due to a lack of funds [19], the publication shows only a few examples of what was exhibited, such as yarn paintings by Mariano Valadez.

Publishing on the yarn paintings continues, although perhaps not with the intensity of the 1960s and 1970s. A recent publication, *Huichol Indian Sacred Rituals* (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992), is a valuable record of the work of Mariano Valadez. It provides full-colour illustrations of a number of paintings published elsewhere as calendars, together with brief descriptions of their meanings; and an explanation of symbols often used in his yarn paintings.

In the 1990s, there is a large, well-developed market for Huichol yarn paintings, both within Mexico and internationally. Much yarn painting is bought and sold in Puerto Vallarta. There are a number of stores and galleries that specialize in indigenous art, and one that specializes in Huichol art only. Huichol artists know these galleries; and one often sees the artists making the rounds of the galleries, carrying boxes of crafts for sale.

Transportation routes influence how the Huichols sell their crafts. There are now scheduled air flights from San Andrés to the city of Tepic, and so it is a matter of hours for artists to leave their community in the Sierra and arrive in Puerto Vallarta. The cost is not unreasonable, being about N$115 pesos ($38 U.S. in January 1994); the artists put together about N$500-1,500 pesos ($166-$500 U.S.) worth of merchandise at a time, and then invest in a ticket to Puerto Vallarta to sell it. Some artists even operate as middlemen on these trips, buying work from other artists in the Sierra and reselling it to dealers. It is somewhat more time-consuming to go from the eastern districts of Santa Catarina and San Sebastian to Tepic and Puerto Vallarta. The artists from these communities seem to sell their goods more frequently in Guadalajara and Mexico City.

Some wholesale dealers buy crafts for resale in the United States or Europe, either to galleries or to the public. These dealers tend to buy better quality art, and to pay good prices for it because it will be resold at higher prices. For this reason, the artists will often try to sell art to them first, and approach the Mexican retail or government outlets only if they cannot sell to the dealers. There are some Huichol artists who are now well-enough known that they can sell directly into the United States or Europe themselves. They do not have to make the rounds of middlemen at all.

Some artists manage to sell directly to the public, including non-Spanish-speaking tourists. In Mexico City, a market called the Ciudadela fosters sales of native crafts by providing living quarters for native artists. A group of Huichols, mostly from Santa Catarina, operates out of this market; and sells both at the Ciudadela and at the prestigious Mercado Sabado in San Angel; however, this group sells mainly beadwork and weaving rather than yarn painting.

In addition to the private dealers, Mexican state and federal government agencies influence the production of Huichol crafts. In the past, government agencies attempted to foster yarn painting as a commercial endeavour, through means such as the INI-sponsored workshop in Tepic in the 1960s or an instructional program in the Sierra during the 1970s. In the 1990s, the government agencies are concentrating more on the financing and marketing of Huichol crafts, rather than teaching the Huichols what to make.

An example of government marketing is found in the state of Nayarit, where the government maintains craft outlets in Tepic and the newly-built tourist centre of Nuevo Vallarta. Crafts are purchased through a central buying agency; then distributed to small stores in museums and markets [20]. These stores sell a good deal of beadwork, and souvenir items such as "god's eyes." They sell yarn paintings by few artists, apparently because most yarn painters can sell directly to the dealers and get better prices for their work; the few yarn painters who do sell to the state seem to be either beginners or "folk art" painters who produce paintings in volume.

Thus there is now a pyramid of sales, depending on the quality of the art, and how well-known the artist is. The best artists--those who can command the best prices--sell directly to foreign countries. Often much or all of their production is commissioned in advance. The next level sell to the wholesale dealers for resale in foreign countries or to the better galleries and retail outlets in Mexico. The third level sells to the government outlets and lower-paying galleries in Mexico, or sells directly to tourists. These categories are not absolute, and some artists deal at several levels. Nonetheless, my observation is that the artists tend to work mainly in one or two of these categories, but not all of them.

SUMMARY

This history of yarn painting illustrates how the paintings evolved as an ethnic art. Parezo (1983:189) calls the twenty-year growth in popularity of Navaho sand paintings one of the quickest rises of a craft on record; clearly, yarn paintings have had a growth in popularity that is equally meteoric. In just twenty years, the yarn paintings were transformed from a little-known religious offering to a commercial product sold in a world market. In 1950, the paintings were unknown; indeed commercial painting per se may not have begun until the late 1950s. By the mid-1970s, yarn paintings were being exhibited and sold around the world.

Both Huichol artists and non-Huichol supporters have played a part in this growth. The main contribution of non-Huichols has been in recognizing the commercial potential of the art, creating opportunities for the artists to sell their art, and promoting the art commercially. Anthropologists such as Soto Soria, Furst, and Eger Valadez brought the art to public attention by exhibiting and writing about it. The Franciscans of Zapopan and government officials of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista marketed the art, and established workshops to encourage the artists to teach other Huichols. This encouragement and marketing role continues to be important today. State and federal government agencies in Mexico, organizations such as the Huichol Center, and individual buyers and dealers continue to foster and market the art.

Huichol artists such as Ramón Medina and Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos responded to this encouragement with consistent creativity and innovation. They saw the opportunities provided by these new markets for their traditional art-forms, and evolved an art that was able to transcend cultural barriers and appeal to buyers around the world.

Despite the popularity of the paintings, it is clear that there is very little written about yarn paintings before the mid-1960s; and surprisingly little after that, considering the amount of yarn painting moving through the markets. Only three authors have written about yarn painting at any length, and this mainly on three artists: Peter Furst on Ramón Medina, Juan Negrín on José Benítez Sánchez, and Susana Eger Valadez on Mariano Valadez. Most other references to commercial yarn painting are passing remarks in articles concerned with other matters.

Since Furst and Negrín, no writers have documented the evolution of yarn paintings; and almost nothing has been written on the dozens, if not hundreds, of yarn painters who have turned out thousands of yarn paintings over the last thirty years. Thus, it appears that the published record continues to be sadly lacking on the history of the yarn painters and their paintings. Evidently a great many artists have been neglected, and a considerable amount remains to be said about these paintings.

The lack of interest seems particularly surprising in view of the fact that Huichol art and religion have been a principal focus of researchers. For the period before 1960, one wonders whether very little yarn painting was being done, or whether the researchers simply did not learn much about yarn paintings. For the period after 1960, perhaps the fact that the yarn paintings were regarded by many as a commercial "tourist" art, and therefore not of great ethnographic interest, explains the lack of attention paid to them.

In the next chapter, I will turn to the artists themselves, to see what their accounts can add to the history of yarn painting contained in the literature.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

[1] Weigand (1972:78-9) addresses the problem of Huichol population statistics and some of the difficulties in collecting reliable figures. As a result, the figures have varied widely over the past forty years.

[2] Rafael López de la Torre, Huichol governor, personal communication.

[3] Documentary sources tend to substantiate the early primacy of hunting deer, bear, and *jabalí* (Sp: wild peccary), at least during the Spanish colonial period (Rojas 1992:97-98,105-107). After the Mexicans expelled the Spanish, who seem to have actually protected the Huichol from invading Mestizo ranchers, there are repeated statements that the Huichol were starving, that their corn harvests were not enough to last the year, and that they were relying on hunting and gathering (Rojas 1992:153,158,165-168). However, it should also be noted that during this period, the Huichol were also being pushed off some of their most productive farm land, including the plain between Huejuquilla el Alto and Tenzompa.

[4] This is just one of many names which appear in the literature to describe the Sun-god. Lumholtz (1900:10) comments that it is not uncommon for deities to have many names.

[5] The Mexican government is currently making plans to provide protection to Huichol sacred sites. There is some discussion among Huichol elders as to whether the protected site for *Tatei Rapawiyeme* should be located in Lake Chapala or a site farther south in the state of Colima. Leopoldo López, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, personal communication.

[6] Recently some Cora and Tepehuane Indians have begun to make and sell yarn paintings; I photographed examples of these paintings in 1993-4. While the manufacturing technique is the same as the Huichol paintings, the colour use and designs are different.

[7] Trini Lahirigoyen, Museo Nacional de Antropología, personal communication

[8] Kamffer (1957) appears to be the first reference to yarn painting in English; but he does not discuss the paintings in any depth.

[9] Furst (1978:27) states that Ramón "sometimes straddled with less than equanimity the two contradictory worlds," and that he "occasionally acted out...in alcoholic conviviality."

[10] Enfield Richmond de Mejía, personal communication

[11] I have taken the date of publication from Fikes (1985:373). These magazines were reprinted in 1980, though with black and white rather than colour illustrations; my references are to the 1980 edition.

[12] Lic. Alfonso Manzanilla González, former Executive Coordinator of Plan HUICOT, personal communication

[13] In the mid-1970s, during the heyday of Plan HUICOT, planes were flying in and out of the Huichol Sierra almost daily, carrying government officials, workers, and Huichols. One man in Nueva Colonia, which has an airstrip, told me that during this time it was easy to visit San Andrés because planes went back and forth so often. Now, communication is actually more difficult; and San Andrés is an arduous walk or vehicle trip through the mountains.

[14] One artist I met did manufacture yarn paintings in the Sierra, but he purposely chose to live at the end of the road into the region. Most Huichols live farther on, down narrow mountain trails, where the only means of transport is on foot or by animals.

[15] Enfield Richmond de Mejía, personal communication

[16] The exhibit began in San Francisco, from 4 November 1978-4 March 1979; then travelled to Chicago's Field Museum, from 1 May 1979-3 September 1979; and New

York's American Museum of Natural History, 7 November 1979 to 10 February 1980 (Berrin and Dreyfus n.d.).

[17] No Spanish name is given for Hakatemi.

[18] This Center is also known in Spanish as the Centro Huichol.

[19] Grace Johnson, Curator, San Diego Museum of Man, personal communication.

[20] Lic. Carlos Miguel González Méndez, Coordinación al Fomento a las Artesanías, state of Nayarit, personal communication.

CHAPTER 4
YARN PAINTERS AND THEIR PAINTINGS

This chapter will examine the development of yarn painting from the perspective of the yarn painters themselves. I will begin by looking at who the artists are, what type of background they have, and why they choose to make yarn paintings.

My goal is to present information which bears on the aesthetic analysis of the paintings: in particular, how the paintings evolved; whether they represent an authentically Huichol art-form; and to what extent the paintings have been modified by the demands of the western market. Evidently, an important concern is whether the artists themselves are immersed in traditional cultural values; or, as Weigand (1981:19-20) suggests, are merely "professional Indians" who mix traditional motifs according to the demands of the tourist market.

I selected concrete indicators which have a bearing on whether the artists might be regarded as traditional or acculturated. Where the artists were born, and in what type of community they were raised provide an indicator of whether the artists had exposure to Huichol culture as children. A second indicator is whether the artists attended a school, and received some form of western education. Schooling alone does not indicate an acculturated individual, since other factors influence how much the person may have been affected by his or her experience; one must ask whether the school was in the Sierra or in a Mestizo community; and how long or how often the student attended school.

An equally important question is the extent to which the artist may have been educated in Huichol traditions; and whether the person continues to pursue traditional goals in life, such as the goal of becoming a *mara'a kame*. This pursuit provides a measure of the person's commitment to traditional religious values; and indirectly, an indication of the extent to which the artist may be reflecting his or her own visionary experiences in yarn paintings.

Clearly the type of information I have collected on these questions is preliminary. Only by surveying large numbers of Huichol artists in depth would it be possible to provide definitive answers on the experience of all Huichol artists; I have explained the logistical concerns which make such a study a lengthy and difficult project. Therefore, my emphasis here will be to demonstrate representative career-paths, and to show a range of life-histories of Huichol artists. These artists' careers demonstrate trends. As I interviewed more and more artists, I found that these trends were repeated in the lives of different individuals. Moreover, since I interviewed some of the founders of the art, as well as younger artists who were recruited after them, I was able to record both the career paths of artists at the beginning of the commercial art, and how these careers may have changed over time.

In addition to the characteristics and career paths of individual artists, I also look at the general patterns of recruitment and training of the Huichol artists. I ask how artists are chosen and trained; whether they select themselves, or are selected by others; whether they learn on their own, or with the help of others; and whether the teaching and transmission is between Huichols or whether westerners intervene in the process. Evidently, this transmission process also affects whether the paintings represent Huichol or western aesthetic values, and provides an assessment of the artists' own reasons for practicing this art-form.

A third type of information which I was particularly interested in was the artists' motivations for making yarn paintings. I was especially interested in whether there was an underlying didactic purpose, directed either towards westerners or other Huichols. I wanted to find out if yarn paintings represented a means for Huichol artists to reach out and teach other people from other cultures about their traditions; or whether the yarn paintings represented a form of internal communication or teaching among Huichols themselves. The artists' purposes for painting, and the extent to which the artists were willing to make their own motivations public, is of course, a central focus of concern in aesthetic analysis.

This chapter introduces some yarn painters and their paintings. I have focussed here on key individuals who played an important part in the development of the art, or people whose experiences illustrate certain trends. I have left out people whose stories repeat or overlap those of others, such as members of the same family who share a similar history.

Nine artists are presented. Four might be described as important founders, innovators, and teachers of other artists: Guadalupe (Lupe) de la Cruz Ríos, who was one of the first commercial artists together with her husband, Ramón Medina Silva; Eligio Carrillo, who worked with Lupe; Mariano Valadez, co-founder of the Huichol Center; and José Benítez Sánchez, who also worked with Lupe and Ramón, and since has become widely-known internationally. Artists who learned from these founders but who followed more modest career paths, and younger artists who may yet become innovators include Fabiano González Ríos, José Isabel (Chavelo) González de la Cruz, Alejandro López de la Torre, Santos Daniel Carrillo Jiménez, and Modesto Rivera Lemus.

The people described here I have interviewed myself, except for José Benítez Sánchez, for whom I drew upon the writings of Juan Negrín and reports by other people. In general, the accounts I have given are the artists' own versions of events. The stories and biographies are based on my interviews. Much of the text in this section is a straightforward transcription of my fieldnotes and interviews. I have altered very little what the artists told me; my own comments and impressions are identified by use of the first person. Therefore, occasional colloquialisms, simple language, or statements of emotion reflect the artists' own styles of speech.

The chapter is arranged in a roughly chronological order, to parallel the historical overview in the preceding chapter. This complementary presentation illustrates the development of yarn painting from two perspectives: a review of the literature, and the stories told by the painters. In presenting these stories, I am also mindful of the fact that the history of particular people's lives are one of the best ways of understanding how life is lived in a culture (Langness 1965; Kelley 1978). These stories are snapshots, of particular artists in time, and of the evolution of the art. It is as though we were looking at moments in the development of yarn painting through the eyes of the makers. Clearly, such a description does not encompass all artists or all events. It is meant only to suggest or outline what may have happened.

GUADALUPE DE LA CRUZ RIOS

Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos (Lupe) is perhaps the most important person in this study, since my relationship with her has shaped this research. She is also one of the founders of modern yarn painting. Therefore, her story is also the story of the early years of the art-form.

Lupe was born in the foothill region between Tepic and the Santiago River. She is not sure of the date of her birth; but thinks it was about 1918, after the Mexican Revolution ended. Her father Umberto de la Cruz and his parents had left Santa Catarina, fleeing the bloody warfare that raged through the Sierra during the Revolution. Her mother, Jesusita Rosa Ríos, was a member of the Ríos family, so-called because they lived near the Santiago River [1]. Her maternal grandfather, Candelaria Rosa, was also a refugee from Santa Catarina, while her maternal grandmother, Angelita Ríos, was a Mestiza who spoke Huichol and was widely known as a healer. Thus Lupe's cultural roots lead back to Santa Catarina. When Lupe was growing up, the Santiago River region was remote and isolated back country. Many Huichol refugees lived there; this situation has led to much intermarriage of people from slightly different Huichol traditions.

Lupe was first married when she was thirteen, to a boy about her own age. He died shortly after, from gangrene in his foot. A year later, she was married to an older man as a second wife, somewhat against her will. This marriage also did not last long. Her third husband was Ramón Medina Silva. In about the mid-1930s, the two met on the coast of Nayarit, where both had gone as migrant workers. Ramón was a year younger than Lupe, who was about 18 at the time; his family came from San Sebastián [2].

This third marriage was more enduring. For the next twenty years, the couple lived a fairly traditional lifestyle, farming and attending ceremonies in the mountains, or going to the coast to work. Their life changed and entered the historical record when they moved to Guadalajara. This move appears to have been about 1961, when both were in their early forties [3]. Lupe and Ramón were selling crafts to the Basilica of Zapopan. Lupe says that at that time very few Huichols were selling crafts; they were almost the only ones.

Lupe had always had an interest in making things, and learned skills such as embroidery as a child. She can remember, as a young girl, fasting all morning while she practiced a new embroidery pattern; that way, a person will learn quickly and not forget. According to Lupe, it was she who taught Ramón how to make crafts, including yarn paintings. She insists that many paintings attributed to Ramón were made by both of them. Nevertheless Ramón became expert in the paintings, originating many designs. Lupe and other members of the family insist that Ramón was a visionary; that is, he experienced shamanic visions, and these were the inspiration for the subjects he illustrated in his paintings.

In 1967, Salomón Nahmad Sittón invited the couple to come to Tepic to teach other Huichols how to do yarn paintings. They agreed; and over the next few years taught many Huichols and even Mestizos (racially-mixed Mexicans [4]) in a school run by the government and directed by Miguel Palafox. Lupe remembers teaching the brothers Guadalupe and Fabiano González Ríos, Barajas, Eligio Carrillo, José

Benítez Sánchez, and Cresencio Pérez Robles.

It is worth noting that many of their students were, in fact, relatives of the couple, either through kinship or marriage; Guadalupe González Ríos and his brother, Fabiano González Ríos, were *primos* (Sp: cousins) of Lupe through the Ríos family; José Benítez Sánchez was a *primo* of Ramón Medina through family in San Sebastián; Cresencio Pérez's brother is married to Lupe's sister; and Eligio Carrillo, though not a relative, came from the same village as the Ríos family and became a *compadre* [5] of Ramón and Lupe. Many of these students have, in turn, become leading yarn painters; and have passed on their knowledge to their own apprentices.

By this time, Lupe and Ramón's marriage was unhappy, due to Ramón's infidelity. He and Lupe separated after coming to Tepic; he lived with another woman, and she went to live with her family at Allende for a year. They reunited briefly, shortly before his death. In June 1971, Ramón was shot in a conflict over a woman, during a fiesta with Lupe's relatives near Colorín. Lupe says he was shot by the *cantador* (Sp: singing shaman) at the fiesta, who was probably paid by someone else. Lupe was in Tepic, where she received a message the next day to find a helicopter to airlift Ramón to Tepic. Lupe went to a friend of Ramón's, who had access to a helicopter, to try to arrange it; unfortunately, no helicopters were available, so she persuaded a doctor to accompany her back up the Santiago River, and sent a message that the family was to bring Ramón down by boat. By the time they met, Ramón was dying. He was taken to the hospital in Tepic; then buried in a cemetery in Tepic.

Afterwards, Lupe continued to live by doing crafts; but gradually she sank into poverty and obscurity. Her knees were crippled, apparently by a disease which may be rheumatism or arthritis; and she spent all her money seeking cures from shamans. Many of the buyers and contacts seem to have been friends of Ramón's. They formed associations with other Huichol families; and she did not see them again after a while. In the late 1980s, her fortunes took another turn, when a Canadian friend named Edmond Faubert took her and her family on a trip through Canada and the United States visiting Indian reserves. It was on this trip that I first met her, since Faubert's family lived in the area of Quebec where I had a cottage.

Since then, she has made a number of trips to Canada and the United States; and acquired a new group of friends. These friends help her and her family by buying crafts from them, an extremely important consideration for impoverished indigenous people in a country such as Mexico. In return, she teaches about Huichol culture; and performs basic healing ceremonies. When visiting indigenous communities, she promotes very strongly the importance of remembering their culture and traditions.

As of 1994, Lupe was not yet a shaman; she was still trying to complete the first six years of pilgrimages required, and lacked one year. However, she has certain visionary abilities and some of the powers of a *mara'a kame*, which a person may acquire during successive pilgrimages. Within her family, she is considered the *jefe* (Sp: chief) or leading elder, recognized as having much experience and knowledge.

I know Lupe to be a forceful woman of great strength of character, and a rather charismatic presence. Ramón Medina must have been an extraordinarily strong and charismatic person to overshadow her, which he seems to do in books written about the couple. She is now in her mid-seventies, but is still battling to follow her own path and keep her family together. She is comparatively sophisticated, and functions well in many situations which are not part of her culture; and she has considerable insight into people, having travelled a great deal in other countries; still, at times, there are gaps in her knowledge which show she does not completely understand North American ways. She uses a broad vocabulary of Spanish, often with complex imagery, which reflects her intelligence; nevertheless, her phrasing is often roundabout or elliptical, which seems to characterize Huichol grammar imposed onto Spanish.

Lupe no longer does yarn paintings, saying that she does not have the strength in her hands to press down the wool. She prefers to spend most of her time embroidering Huichol costumes, which she sells to visitors. Members of her family continue to make yarn paintings with designs originated by Ramón and Lupe. Indeed when I first met this family in 1988, they had copies of several of Ramón's paintings for sale; and they offered to make me copies of any designs I particularly liked. The family sees nothing wrong with making and selling copies of a successful and well-liked yarn painting. They may vary colours or designs somewhat, according to their mood or taste; but the designs are substantially the same as the originals.

Lupe and Ramón evolved a style of painting characterized by stick-figures and bold, geometric shapes. Figures are outlined in one colour; then filled in with a second colour. The backgrounds are filled in with large expanses of solid colour; often only one or two colours are used in the background. In the 1960s, the painters used a comparatively thick wool, so there was not space for much elaborate detail. The style originated by Ramón and Lupe dominated yarn paintings in the 1960s and early 1970s. Many painters used their style, or directly copied their paintings. Even today, thirty years later, one still sees paintings for sale which are direct copies of theirs.

Six of Lupe's paintings are illustrated in *Art of the Huichol Indians*: "Peter Furst receiving the name of a deity before the 1966 pilgrimage" (Berrin 1978:67), "Defeat of a powerful and dangerous sorcerer by Our Elder Mother Deer in the First Times" (Berrin 1978:123, repeated on cover), "How We Contemplate *Hikuri* in *Wirikuta*" (Berrin 1978:137), "The Dead Soul's Journey to the Spirit World" (Berrin 1978:163). Particularly outstanding for its strong graphic design sense is "The Five Sacred Colours of Maize" (Berrin 1978:159); I have since seen this painting reproduced on T-shirts. Lupe is also the painter of one of the most frequently copied painting themes, "How the Husband Assists in the Birth of a Child" (Berrin 1978:162).

JOSE ISABEL (CHAVELO) GONZALEZ DE LA CRUZ

José Isabel González de la Cruz is known by the common Mexican nickname of Chavelo. I have known him since I first met Lupe; he accompanied her on the cultural tour of Canada in 1988. Chavelo is married to Lupe's niece Kuka, a daughter of Lupe's sister Manuela. He is a yarn painter of twenty years' experience, and one of the most industrious artisans in the family. He is a quiet, reserved man of about forty, although not shy; he has a strong sense of moral values, and I have seen him gather up his courage to oppose economic injustices inflicted on the family by more powerful Mestizo or western individuals.

Chavelo was born in 1955 in Amatlán de Jora, a town in the Sierra just north of Guadalajara. At one time, there was a large Huichol community in Amatlán de Jora, and Chavelo says there once was a temple where all the Huichols gathered to hold ceremonies; however, Mestizo ranchers have gradually pushed many of the Huichols out, and there have been long and bitter disputes over land rights and boundaries. Now few Huichols live there.

Chavelo's father is Refugio González, a *mara'a kame* widely-known as a healer, who once was taken as far as Tijuana to do curing; Refugio's family fled Tuxpan during the Mexican Revolution. Chavelo's mother was from Santa Catarina;

his father encountered his mother while she was washing clothes in a stream as a young girl, and made her one of his four wives. Afterwards, her family accepted the marriage as a *fait accompli*. Chavelo grew up speaking Huichol only until he was about ten years old. Then his father sent him to school in Amatlán de Jora, where he learned to speak Spanish, and to read and write; he completed grade six.

Chavelo began to do yarn paintings while living in the foothill community of Caracol; in 1974, he began to work with Lupe as an assistant. She had many orders for yarn paintings using designs by Ramón, and so Chavelo helped her to fill the orders. After a few years, when there were no more requests for Ramón's designs, he began to originate his own designs. His paintings still have many characteristics of Ramón and Lupe's style, although the designs are original. "The Spirits come to the Drum during the Ceremony" (Plate 12), a painting I purchased from him in 1988, shows the simple stick-figure shaman, sketched-in figures, thicker wool, and limited range of colours typical of paintings of the 1960s and the early 1970s. "Sun and Four Deer" (Plate 9) repeats the theme of a traditional offering, and is only slightly more complex than "Eagle and *Nierika*" in Plate 1.

Chavelo's adherence to the early style of painting has become a problem for him. He still paints with the thick yarn used in the early years; there is less demand for his paintings, and the dealers have told him he must begin using the thinner yarns popular now. Chavelo is preparing to make the switch but he feels that this change will make the paintings more time-consuming and less profitable to make.

Chavelo has begun the process of becoming a *mara'a kame*. He has made four pilgrimages to Wirikuta, and says that he is asking the gods there to make him a better artist. He emphasizes to me that I should say he is like a student, no more; he is not a *mara'a kame* although he hopes to become one in a few years. While he is beginning to have an ability to "see" with vision, this is not yet the basis for his painting. Nonetheless, Chavelo has a considerable amount of knowledge about the traditional use and meaning of yarn paintings, and over the years he has taught me much about them; however, he is concerned about how much information he or I should reveal.

FABIANO GONZALEZ RIOS

Fabiano González Ríos is a man in his mid-fifties whom I interviewed in his small cement block house in Tepic. He is a rather charming man, who is quick to see a joke. We laughed a lot during our interview. He enjoys talking about Huichol customs and his yarn paintings, and is glad that people from other countries take an interest in them.

Fabiano also comes from the Santiago River region, and calls himself a *primo* (Sp: cousin) of Lupe's; his mother was a Ríos, an aunt of Lupe's mother. His father was a *mara'a kame* named Benito González who lived at Cerritos in the foothill region.

Fabiano began to do yarn paintings in about 1969 or 1970. He says that he attended the government school in Tepic. At the time, Miguel Palafox was the director and teaching in the school; Fabiano does not remember Lupe and Ramón being there. He describes the school as a big building, perhaps fifteen metres long, full of people. There were Huichols and Mestizos taking classes, but he was quick to insist on the difference between them. The Mestizos wanted to learn yarn painting, but they didn't know anything about the ceremonies or stories the Huichols had grown up with. The Mestizos' yarn paintings were full of burros, chickens, and pigs, since those were the only things they knew.

In contrast, Palafox encouraged the Huichols to paint the things they knew about, the customs they practiced in their culture. Fabiano insists that the only thing Palafox taught him was how to lay down the yarn; (he uses the word *tejer* (Sp: weave) for this technique). He learned the rest by himself. Fabiano began to think about the Huichol stories and customs, and to put down what he had learned in his youth. He stayed in the school about six months, until he learned to do the paintings well. The government paid the students to learn, by buying the paintings as soon as they were done. When he felt confident, he left the school; and began to sell directly in the shops in Tepic. He has been doing that ever since.

He mainly works on his own, within his family. The farthest he has travelled is to Tijuana, where he went one time to try to sell paintings. However, he found the twenty-four hour bus ride grueling, and has not done it since. Mostly he manages to sell his production in Tepic. Over the years, he has supported his family with yarn paintings; but sometimes he gets "fed up" (Sp: *enfadado*) sitting all day pressing wool with his thumb. Then he engages in manual labour; but soon he gets fed up doing that too, and goes back to yarn painting.

Fabiano's paintings have a charming folk art quality. They are rather naive, and simple-looking; the large paintings he shows me have few colours. They still have the feel of Lupe and Ramón's style, with simple figures and shapes, although Fabiano has evolved his own style of making figures. Nevertheless, Fabiano uses the thinner wool popular now, and he puts more detail into his paintings than the 1960s artists did. I have included one example of Fabiano's paintings: "The *Mara'a kame* Saves a Patient from Death and the Owl" (Plate 11).

Fabiano's paintings tend to sell in the souvenir and folk art market as well; his best sellers are very small paintings, 20 cm x 20 cm or 30 cm x 30 cm, which he sells for a few dollars U.S. He says he can hardly keep up with the demand for these. In contrast, his larger and more elaborate paintings of 60 cm x 60 cm hardly sell at all.

Fabiano's career might be characterized as that of a folk art painter who has never become well-known. He is not featured in any catalogues; and although he signs his paintings, probably few buyers know his name. Nonetheless, he is a professional who has been doing yarn paintings for thirty-five years, and he has a fair amount of traditional knowledge; when asked, he can explain in considerable detail the meaning of his paintings. He is not a *mara'a kame*, but has had visionary experiences which he puts into many of his paintings; the painting I have illustrated is based on his personal vision.

ELIGIO CARRILLO VICENTE

Eligio Carrillo Vicente is another painter whose artistic roots go back to Ramón Medina and Lupe. Eligio is considered by some dealers to be one of the best yarn painters, consistently creative and innovative over many years. Interestingly, when I showed photographs of yarn paintings to Huichols in San Andrés, they almost unanimously preferred Eligio's as well.

Eligio lives in a small village in the Santiago River region. I was introduced to him at his *rancho* by one of his nephews who is married to one of Lupe's nieces. After hearing my credentials and reading my letter of introduction from the Instituto Nacional Indigenista, Eligio agreed to an interview. He is a bluff, hearty man in his forties, with a "full speed ahead" type of character. I felt he would answer almost anything, with little concern for what other people might think; however, on reviewing my tapes, it was clear that there were also times when he clearly held back and did not want to reveal certain types of information.

The Carrillo family left San Andrés during the Mexican Revolution and settled near the Santiago River. Eligio lived in Colorín when he was growing up, a community which is also home to the Ríos family. At that time, Colorín was remote and isolated. Eligio says it was a day and a half walk to reach Tepic, going along a rough trail; there was no road.

In about 1970, Eligio moved to Tepic, where he met Ramón Medina and saw the yarn paintings Ramón was doing. From the first time he saw them, he liked them very much, and resolved to become a painter himself. He bought some boards, started to make little paintings according to his own ideas, and sold them in the shops in Tepic. The stores asked for more, and within a year or two he was selling them in all the shops. They bought everything he made.

At this point, Ramón Medina approached him and asked him to become his *compadre*. Eligio had a young child at the time, and Ramón offered to stand as godfather to the child. Then Ramón asked Eligio to work with him at his house, and offered to pay him to help him fill orders for yarn paintings. They agreed to begin; but, a week later, Ramón left to attend the fiesta at Colorín where he was killed. Then Lupe asked Eligio to continue helping her to fill orders, since Ramón was no longer able to complete them. She had photographs of Ramón's paintings which she asked him to copy; it was a big commission of 80 paintings. Eligio made them, and continued to live in Lupe's house for about a year helping her. Then he left and went on his own.

Subsequently, he continued to sell through several American dealers; and made two trips to the United States and Canada in about 1977 and 1978. He remembers going to San Francisco, Las Vegas, Santa Fe, New York, Chicago, and a city in Canada which may have been Vancouver, since he remembers big mountains. Since then, he has stayed in Mexico. He has constant orders from dealers; and is able to sell everything he produces, which is a considerable volume of paintings. Family members and apprentices help him, although he says that he draws the designs and directs which colours to use. I found that many young painters in the Santiago River region had worked with Eligio at some time; thus, his style has had considerable influence on that of other yarn painters.

Eligio has shamanic abilities, although he is still continuing to make pilgrimages. He is sometimes roundabout in telling me what he knows, and sometimes straightforward; for example, when I asked if he was a *mara'a kame*, he answered only that he knew "some things." Later, a Huichol friend who was listening while I transcribed the tape pointed out to me that he was actually telling me he knew a great deal when he said that. It is clear that, at a number of points in the interview, he is talking about his own visionary experiences or abilities. His explanations of the deeper meanings of his paintings far exceeds that given to me by other painters, as does his explanations of shamanic forces. I will cite what he said at many points throughout this study.

Eligio's paintings are characterized by elongated, stick-figure shamans with flat hats; it is this trademark drawing which many of his apprentices seem to copy. Apart from this feature, it is difficult to generalize about his paintings, since he seems to have passed through several styles. He is particularly fond of the *nierika* form, a round mandala-like painting with radiating colours. "The Mirror which helps the *Mara'a kame* to Heal" (Plate 15) exemplifies a simple version of this form. However, perhaps what sets Eligio's paintings apart is a diamond-hard sense of colour; his paintings have a sharpness of colour contrast and a range of colour use and invention which seems exceptional. This assessment is echoed by some Huichols. When I asked them what they liked most about Eligio's paintings, they said it was how he combined his colours. The sharpness of his colours, together with his trademark drawing, are shown in two paintings: "The *Mara'a kame* talks to the Deer-God at Night" (Plate 14) and "The Sun-God as He Appears at Midday" (Plate 16).

JOSE BENITEZ SANCHEZ

The third influential painter of the 1970s is José Benítez Sánchez. Although I met José Benítez, I did not interview him because he required payment. The text presented here is based on statements by other people, and on the written accounts of Juan Negrín. According to Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos, José Benítez is a relative of Ramón Medina, a *primo* through their family in San Sebastián. José Benítez learned yarn painting with Ramón Medina and Lupe in the late 1960s. During the 1970s, José began to work with Juan Negrín; and together the two produced several exhibits, which were displayed in Guadalajara, Mexico City, and internationally.

José Benítez's early paintings were made in the style of Ramón Medina and Lupe, as shown in two of his paintings in Berrin (1978:157, 158). During the 1970s, he began to develop a unique and recognizable style of his own, characterized by intricate paintings, full of twisting interlocked elements which almost entirely fill the board. There is little massing of background colour in these paintings, unlike the more traditional style in which single design elements clearly stand out against a solid background; it can be difficult to separate visually the foreground and background elements, and figures run into each other. Plate 21 illustrates this type of painting, photographed at the offices of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista. Plate 23 is an even more elaborate version of this style. Plate 22, "Through Peyote, We see the *Nierika* of the Three Worlds," shows a more easily reproduced design with simpler colour use; in the winter of 1993-94, José was flooding the market with dozens of paintings of this type, mostly done in oranges and blues.

José Benítez has taught a number of apprentices, many of whom are his relatives, including Eliseo Benítez Flores, Emilio de la Cruz Benítez, Ceferino Díaz Benítez, and Martin de la Cruz Díaz. These apprentices continue to work in his sinuous, elaborate style, a style which is immediately recognizable and marks them as having worked with him. Plate 24, "Symbols of the Birth of the Corn," shows one painting by an apprentice, Maximino Renteria de la Cruz.

José Benítez is said to be a *mara'a kame*, and some believe him to be the strongest exponent of the *cosmovisión* (Sp: cosmic vision) of the Huichols. He is certainly one of the most famous yarn painters; his work is widely known and commands high prices, especially in Europe. He presently administers the Huichol colony of Zitacua in Tepic; and is preoccupied with problems of government and finances, in addition to his art.

MARIANO VALADEZ

Mariano Valadez has become one of the best-known Huichol yarn painters in the United States. His paintings are widely reproduced in greeting cards and calendars, a poster, and a recent book (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992). This fame is partly due to his own excellence as an artist; but there is no doubt that it is also due in part to the promotional help of his energetic wife, the anthropologist Susana Eger Valadez. No other Huichol artist has come close to this level of market distribution and penetration, and it is not generally typical of how Huichol artists conduct business. In this and many other ways, Mariano Valadez is unique; in describing his career, therefore, it is essential to keep in mind the role Susana has played in it.

I met Susana and Mariano at the Huichol Center in Santiago Ixcuintla, a town on the Santiago River in the flat, coastal region of Nayarit. This is the heart of tobacco-growing country, and the Huichols come down from the mountains every year to work as migrant laborers in the tobacco fields. Mariano's own family came from Santa Catarina to work in the fields. When Mariano was about twelve, his father, a well-known *mara'a kame*, was killed in Santiago. His mother, in a panic and with other children to care for, left Mariano with their *patrón*, a Mestizo family; and returned to the mountains. Mariano was raised by this family in Santiago, although he continued to keep contact with his mother and visit her.

As a young man in 1972, Mariano met a Huichol named Tutukila (or Tiburcio Carrillo Sandoval, in Spanish) who invited him to come to Guadalajara to learn to make yarn paintings. Mariano says he learned little directly from Tutukila at that time; he found work filling in the *fondo* (Sp: the background, the solid colours behind the main designs in the yarn paintings). He did this work for about two years, gradually improving and beginning to receive commissions. Then Mariano moved to Tepic, where he found work as a manual laborer, until he met Tutukila again. This time Tutukila taught Mariano more about painting, and they continued to work together until about 1975.

Subsequently Mariano met American dealer Peter Collings, who worked with Susana Eger. Collings purchased art from Mariano, and Susana sold it in the United States. Mariano credits Collings with encouraging him to improve the quality of his paintings, by asking for the explanations. At that time Mariano made simple designs with little content; Collings encouraged him to make more elaborate paintings, and to explain the meaning according to Huichol tradition. Mariano believes that this concern for meaning plays an important role in helping to preserve Huichol knowledge and traditions, and in making others aware of these traditions. He sees the yarn paintings as having an important teaching function, both for the buyers and for Huichols.

Eventually Susana and Mariano married. They lived for a time in the United States, then returned to Santiago and founded the Huichol Center to support Huichol culture; this organization provides support services for the many Huichols who come to Santiago as laborers, including food, clothing, a birthing room, and medical services. There are serious problems with pesticide poisoning of Huichols who work in the tobacco fields; the Center documents this situation, lobbies to improve conditions, and provides medical care for those who have been poisoned (Eger Valadez 1986b:40; Díaz Romo 1993). The Center is supported in part by the production and sale of arts and crafts; a number of Huichols work there and learn the skills of beadwork and yarn painting. In this way the Center functions as a school, and helps to preserve and transmit traditional skills. Finally, the Center maintains a collection of traditional designs, and one of its goals is to become a museum of Huichol arts.

Mariano is a thoughtful man, who chooses his words with care. It is easy to translate his interview tapes into completely understandable English and academic prose; unlike literal translations of the interview tapes of Fabiano and Eligio, which are almost incomprehensible to anyone who is not used to Huichol speaking patterns and concepts. The same carefulness is evident in Mariano's paintings.

Mariano's paintings are large and elaborate, with a great deal of detail. In particular, the depiction of scenes is more realistic than in the paintings of most early yarn painters; landscape elements such as rocks, trees, flowers, mountains, and caves are more fully sketched or indicated. Many paintings show ceremonies or village scenes, and use methods of realistic depiction such as perspective. Mariano seems to have originated realistic animal drawings, which are unlike the rather symbolic "stick-figure" animals used in Ramón Medina's style, or in traditional Huichol art. One of his most influential paintings seems to have been "Goddess of Life," which illustrates the goddess *Takutsi* giving birth to the animals and human beings (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992:20). Its depiction of the creatures of land, sea, and sky in a circular *nierika*-like design has proved a popular theme, which is now being used in interesting ways by a number of other artists, such as Modesto Rivera Lemus (Plate 19) and José Bautista Carrillo (Plate 33). Mariano's style is now being passed on to other Huichol artists, particularly those who have worked with him at the Huichol Center; and his apprentices' styles show clear resemblances to that of Mariano.

Mariano is not a *mara'a kame*, nor is he a visionary. He is very clear on this point, and says he does not want to mislead me. He paints from his imagination, which is inspired by Huichol tradition, but not from any kind of vision.

ALEJANDRO LOPEZ DE LA TORRE

Alejandro López de la Torre is a comparatively little-known yarn painter, perhaps because he lives in a remote Sierra community and does not leave it often to promote his work. He runs a grocery store, and presently has the *cargo* (Sp: political position) of *comisario*. These occupations take up most of his time, so he does not make many yarn paintings. However, in the past he worked with Mariano Valadez; and travelled to the United States. He attended the museum exhibition in San Diego, and later made a second trip to the United States under the sponsorship of Susana Eger Valadez.

I first met Alejandro when, through a chain of circumstances, I arrived in the Santa Catarina district with no place to stay. His brother, one of the Huichol governors, sent me over to Alejandro's house; I suspect it was because Alejandro was used to dealing with North Americans. Alejandro welcomed me warmly, offered me a room in his house, and asked me what I was doing in a Huichol community. Our subsequent conversation showed that he had the analytical mind of a scholar, although he has had little formal education. After I explained the purpose of my study and how I proposed to interview as many artists as possible, he critiqued my methodology. He said it would be impossible to find many artists since they live throughout the Sierra, and are difficult to locate. Since I was already beginning to realize this, I agreed. Instead he proposed that I do a comparative study of a limited number of painters. He suggested that I select five painters, one each from the five main Huichol communities, and ask each of them to produce five yarn paintings on origin stories. Then I could compare the results.

He felt that such a study would be useful for the Huichols, since there are variations in the origin myths between communities. This study would give them a record of the versions, illustrated with paintings by the best artists. Moreover, he thought it would be useful for my university as well, since my teachers would undoubtedly be interested in the variations in Huichol mythology.

I found his suggestion interesting on several levels; it revealed an intuitive grasp of the principles of research; it addressed my problem of finding the artists within the limited time period allowed by my grant and suggested a solution; and his focus on origin myths hinted at an underlying philosophical theme in Huichol thought.

I had already noticed that people from the Santa Catarina district seemed to focus on the concept of origins; several people had remarked to me, "I know the story of the origins of the following things," and then listed which particular origin stories they knew. I was beginning to think that much Huichol philosophy may be concerned with the origins of, and explanations for, things in this world and the next--an impression that was reinforced by subsequent interviews with Alejandro.

Alejandro's ideas were interesting; and even though it was not the type of study I had embarked on, I thought it was worth pursuing. Since he made the suggestion, I asked him if he would be willing to make me a series of yarn paintings, such as he described; and to give me his explanations. He agreed; we set a price, and I agreed to come back to his house in three months, in order to give him time to make the paintings. When I returned on the agreed-upon day, the paintings were ready. They were lovely. The workmanship was among the tightest and neatest I have seen; the colours were vivid; and the paintings had an energy that was exceptional. The designs were not unusual in themselves, but it was clear that Alejandro had put something extra into them. He agreed that these were better than paintings he would ordinarily make for sale, because he realized he was making these to go into the historical record.

Plate 36 shows one of these yarn paintings, called "The Story of the Ark of *Takutsi Nakawe*"; it depicts a Huichol myth about the origins of Huichol people after a flood which drowned the earth [6].

This study is not based on Alejandro's proposal, but not for lack of merit in it. I intend to pursue his ideas further; they could, for example, be used as the basis of a book for Huichol schools, or an art exhibition. The key will be finding the right artists from other communities, and perhaps a comparative framework for their work. The story I have told here illustrates how fieldwork can be a joint activity between anthropologists and consultants, and how chance encounters can lead to results which may be of benefit to all.

Alejandro was born in Nueva Colonia in the Santa Catarina district of the Sierra in 1955. There was no school when he was young, but when he was about twelve a school started. At that time, his family lived in the *barranca* (Sp: canyon, the region below the pine-forested heights of the Sierra); and no Huichols were living in Nueva Colonia. Alejandro's father sent him to the school, where he stayed about one year. At that time, the Huichol parents donated food and blankets to maintain the school; now the government supplies them. Alejandro's teacher was also responsible for lands (and problems surrounding land tenure); he was preparing a plan to ensure no Mestizos could invade the Sierra, and was trying to secure titles to protect the Huichol land [7]. Therefore, he did not have much time for teaching; and often he was only in school for a week or two, then gone again. As a result, Alejandro did not learn much in school.

The following year, Alejandro's father took him to Nayarit to work on the coast. The whole family made the journey, which took one week walking. His father knew how to make bead earrings and bracelets, so he bought Alejandro beads and taught him. Then Alejandro went to Guadalajara, where he sold beadwork and learned to make "god's eyes". This was in about 1969. He lived in Zapopan on the outskirts of Guadalajara, where a priest had donated a house with many rooms and a patio. Many Huichols arrived from the Sierra and stayed there doing crafts. Alejandro started helping an artist from San Sebastián who was making yarn paintings. Someone had ordered a huge painting; and his teacher asked him to help make it, but Alejandro just filled in the background. The following year, Alejandro went to Mexico City, where he spent the years from 1971 to 1975. In 1975, he began to work with Mariano Valadez, helping him to make yarn paintings by filling in the background.

Alejandro remembers that at this time he did not have any understanding about the Huichol religion or tradition himself. He wasn't interested in the explanations of the paintings. Since he had no ideas of his own, he just sold the paintings "as though they were apples." As he grew older, he became more interested in the meanings. He started to make pilgrimages to *Wirikuta*, and to take on *cargos* (Sp: religious or civil responsibilities) within the community. Through this process, he began to understand the concepts which form the underpinnings of the religion, and why the Huichols sacrifice themselves by fasting and undertaking arduous pilgrimages. Now he tries to present this knowledge in the yarn paintings he makes, and he tries to give the explanations of the paintings to any buyers who ask about them.

Alejandro is not a *mara'a kame*. He began the process of becoming a shaman, and made the necessary pilgrimages to *Wirikuta* for five years. Unfortunately, he says that the gods did not grant him the abilities he asked for. Now he is more interested in understanding Huichol philosophy, and learning the explanations of the stories and images which are presented in yarn paintings. In keeping with his scholarly interests, he is equally interested in learning about the customs of other indigenous people.

SANTOS DANIEL CARRILLO JIMENEZ

Santos Daniel Carrillo Jiménez is a rising star of the younger generation of yarn painters. The dealers consider him one of the best young painters, and already his paintings command high prices. His paintings have an unusual sharpness in imagery, almost as though they were outlined in pen. His animals have a charming quality, and there is a peculiar quality of light in some of his paintings: to me, they almost look as though they are dripping light. His range of paintings is also unusual: he makes paintings that are completely unlike each other both in style and subject matter, whereas most artists tend to paint fairly consistently within a more narrow range. Three paintings by Santos, which illustrate this range are Plate 25, "*Nierika* Symbols which Huichols Paint on their Faces in Ceremonies"; Plate 26, "The Huichol Culture is our Gods" by Santos and two other artists, Andreas Jesucóta Cahtera de la Cruz, and Antonio Vicente Bautista Rivera; and Plate 27, "The Deer-god *Kauyumari* with Guardian Snakes".

I met Santos in his small house, painted a cheerful yellow, on the outskirts of Tepic. Santos is a warm, kindly man with considerable self-confidence; he immediately agreed to an interview even though he did not know me, nor had we been formally introduced by a third party who could vouch for me. This is somewhat unusual in Mexico. Still I could see it made him feel more confident about talking to me when several Huichol friends I had met in San Andrés stopped by, and confirmed who I was.

Santos first started making yarn paintings at a very young age, but stopped for a number of years to continue his education. He told me this story, starting from the beginning. He was born in about 1964. In about 1977, when he was about thirteen, he left San Andrés to work with an uncle in the fields on the coast of Nayarit. One day, he went into town to amuse himself at a fair. While there he met a friend who told him that they could make a lot of money in Mexico City, and that they were practically giving money away in the streets. Santos thought that sounded wonderful; so he persuaded his uncle to give him his wages, and paid for two tickets to Mexico City. Then his friend asked him to pay for materials for yarn paintings: wax, three-ply boards, and "hummingbird brand" yarn. Santos watched his friend making the paintings, and began to learn; but then his friend vanished, taking the work with him. Santos stayed on in Mexico City in a house in which there were a number of Huichols making crafts. Since Santos did not really know how to make anything, he would take ten or twenty "god's eyes" into the street to sell, then bring the money back to the owner, who would give him a few centavos for himself.

One day a Huichol from Santa Catarina came by and persuaded Santos that he should learn to paint in wool and beads. Santos agreed, but says that his paintings were not very good at this time. Santos intended to stay in Mexico City; he had registered in a school for adults, and says that he loved to study. Then in 1978, his father, who was a *mara'a kame* in San Andrés, sent Santos' brother to find him. His father invited him to go on the pilgrimage to *Wirikuta*, and Santos went one time.

The following year, by now aged 15, Santos began primary school in the Franciscan convent in Santa Clara, a village close to San Andrés. He spent the next eight years in school, and forgot all about his art. He stayed five years at the convent; then finished sixth grade in the government school in San Andrés. This completed his primary education; but he wanted to learn more, so he went on to secondary school in Guadalajara. While there, he married and needed money, so he began to make yarn paintings again. He has been making them on his own ever since.

Santos is not a *mara'a kame*. He has not returned to *Wirikuta*, and says that shamanic vision is a gift which only some people are granted. He tries to represent this vision in his paintings, but it is not something which he experiences first hand. He is currently studying in the Catholic Church, not to be a priest but simply to learn to help his family and others. From his explanation, it seemed to me that he is taking a type of pastoral counselling program.

MODESTO RIVERA LEMUS

Modesto Rivera Lemus is another young yarn painter who is rising quickly. I first met him in Puerto Vallarta while I was photographing paintings at the dealers' shops. He was standing outside Arte Mágico Huichol, waiting for the store to open. Beside him on the sidewalk was a huge parcel wrapped in brown paper, which he had carried with him on the bus from Tepic.

When the dealer arrived and Modesto unwrapped the painting, I was overwhelmed. It was an astonishing painting of the Sun, Moon, Earth, and Sea, about 1.2 m x 1.2 m, illustrated in Plate 19, "Black Rain *Nierika*." An huge arch of black rain dominated the centre of the painting, and I thought it took great artistic bravado to run such a large band of black through the middle of a painting.

Modesto welcomed my interest in his art, and quickly grasped that such a study could be a service to the artists. He felt that it would make the artists better known, and that this publicity would help them sell their art and perhaps command better prices from the dealers. He agreed to pose for a photograph with his painting, and invited me to come to his house near Tepic.

About a week later, I took a *combi* (Sp: a collective taxi) which wound back through the foothills outside Tepic. Five years ago, this route was an almost impassible dirt road. The first time I travelled down it, we rode in a battered old *pollero*, a bus with chickens piled on the roof; now the government has built a new paved highway to the planned tourist development at the Presa de Aguamilpa, and mini-buses zip up and down the highway every half-hour.

Modesto lives in a small village a short distance from Eligio Carrillo. Modesto's training as an artist was straightforward; he worked with Eligio Carrillo for about six years as an apprentice, and they became *compadres*, after which he began to paint on his own. His style of painting--the way he makes his figures--reflects Eligio's influence. Nevertheless, he is quite insistent that he did not learn from Eligio, and that his style is his own.

His insistence reflected a theme I had noticed with several of the Huichol artists I interviewed. Artists would tell me that they had taught themselves, that they were solely responsible for the art that they did, and that all the ideas they had were their own. Sometimes they would deny that anyone taught them; or would say that despite having worked with another artist, they did not learn anything from that artist; and that they were the sole source of the art that they made. Sometimes artists would tell me they learned from no one; yet other people would tell me that they had, in fact, spent years working with another artist. This assertion seems to be a deep-seated aesthetic value in Huichol art. It may be simply the Huichol way of saying what a western artist might say as well; that a person begins to make art when they have their own ideas and work on their own; or it may be that because the traditional culture emphasizes the importance of direct communication with, or learning from, the gods, a concept which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight, the artists value only original work.

Now that Modesto paints on his own, he tries to originate his own designs. He showed me photographs of his paintings, which reveal that his style is evolving quickly from simple paintings to large, complex paintings like the "Black Rain *Nierika*." He began to make this type of painting at the suggestion of a dealer, who asked him to paint the solar eclipse which occurred in Mexico several years ago. The eclipse has become a popular theme; in 1992 I first saw a version of this done by José Benítez shortly after the eclipse.

Modesto was born in 1961, so he is now about 33 years old. He grew up in El Pinito, a remote community in the foothills of the Santiago River, about one day's walk from where he now lives. He attended school from the time he was about eight years old, and finished the third grade. However, he says that it was only after he left school that he taught himself to read and write. His father always carried out the Huichol ceremonies, and so Modesto learned about the traditional religion from him. Now he has started on the path to become a *mara'a kame*, and has made several pilgrimages to *Wirikuta*. He feels that his shamanic training has given him strength and energy, which feeds his imagination and his understanding of the religion, and which is reflected in his paintings. However, he himself does not paint from visions.

SUMMARY

The histories of the yarn painters I interviewed indicate certain common themes. All the yarn painters I spoke to shared a common background of having grown up in Huichol communities in the Sierra or the foothill regions; therefore, all had taken part in traditional ceremonies as young people, and received a basic education in Huichol traditions.

Yarn painters originated from all parts of the Sierra. There was no clear distinction between Chapalagana or Santiago Huichol among the ranks of yarn painters. While some of the first commercial yarn painters in the 1960s, such as Lupe and Eligio, came from the Santiago region, the statements of artists such as Santos and Alejandro--artists from San Andrés and Santa Catarina respectively--make it clear that, by the late 1960s, there were houses in both Guadalajara and Mexico City where Huichols from the Sierra congregated to make and sell art. This trend continues in the 1990s, with yarn painters coming from all regions occupied by the Huichol.

Since the 1960s, there have been increasing numbers of Huichols living in cities. As a result, there are now some young Huichols in their twenties who were born and raised in the cities, and who are pursuing careers as artisans. While I talked with some of these city-raised Huichol, none were represented in the group of yarn painters I interviewed.

Weigand (1981:17-20) makes a sharp distinction between Huichols living in the traditional Sierra communities, and more acculturated Huichols living outside the Sierra. The dividing line between "city" Huichols and Sierra Huichols is probably more blurred now than it was in the 1960s. It is not uncommon for Huichols to maintain both a house in the city, especially in Tepic, Guadalajara, or Mexico City, and a home in the Sierra, or to have relatives in both locations; and a great deal of visiting goes on between people in different locations.

Schooling became generally available to the Huichol in the 1960s and 1970s (Reed 1972:102-115). The Instituto Nacional Indigenista established some schools to serve Huichol communities in the Sierra, and Plan HUICOT built more day schools throughout the Sierra in the 1970s (Manzanilla n.d.:88-110). Catholic missionaries such as the Franciscans made some schooling available to the Huichol in the 1950s; and indeed even earlier Lumholtz (1902:v. 1, 509) refers to nine young Huichol boys being taken by the Bishop of Zacatecas for training as instructors in 1879. None of the artists I spoke to had attended mission schools before the 1960s. Older artists such as Lupe, never attended school and are illiterate. Middle-aged artists reported a limited amount of schooling; for example, Alejandro attended the INI school in the Sierra for about a year. It is younger artists, in their twenties and thirties now, who have had the most opportunity to attend school and become literate; Santos recounts that he attended a school for adults in Mexico City during the early 1970s, then returned to the San Andrés where he attended a Catholic mission school until grade five, then an INI school to finish grade six, before continuing his secondary education in Guadalajara. Thus, the general pattern was that artists over the age of forty had little or no schooling; while artists under forty generally had attended at least a few years of school. Some of the younger artists had attended secondary school (which ends at grade nine), or even preparatory school, which is a comparatively high level of schooling in a country such as Mexico, which still has high levels of illiteracy in the countryside.

There was no single motivation for becoming a yarn painter: opportunity, availability of a teacher, personal interest in the art, and the need to make a living all played a part in the choice of career. Some artists, such as Eligio and Modesto, expressed a fascination with the art itself. Others, such as Santos and Alejandro, began making yarn paintings as young teenagers for financial reasons. A consistent theme was that a teacher appeared and urged the young person to begin making paintings.

Transmission of yarn painting skill is mainly from Huichol to Huichol. Most artists spent a period of time apprenticing themselves to another artist. They might begin by filling in the background with solid colours; when they had mastered the basic skills, they would move on to making their own designs. Formal teaching by non-Huichols played a minor role. Although the government ran a school in Tepic for a short time, only one artist mentioned in this study attended it; and he felt its influence was minimal.

The artist-to-artist transmission seems to follow kinship and regional lines, although this is not a hard and fast rule. In the first years, yarn painting centred around Ramón Medina and Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos in Tepic; many of the artists who learned from the couple came from the Santiago River region, and were related by kinship ties or marriage. By the late 1960s and through the 1970s, more centres of learning were added, especially in Guadalajara and Mexico City. In both locations, there were houses or workshops in which Huichols congregated and learned the art from each other.

The Huichol artists cannot be characterized as isolated, indigenous artists who have never left their homeland. Despite a lack of formal education, many of the Huichol artists are fairly well-travelled and knowledgable about their own and other countries. A number of the painters have travelled to other countries for exhibitions; some have been not only to the United States and Canada, but to Europe and Japan as well. Because the painters deal with buyers from other countries, they have a somewhat cosmopolitan outlook; and understand that they are part of an international art market, even if they do not always understand how it operates.

My observation is that this pattern of travel and a migratory lifestyle is typical of many modern Huichols, even those who are not artists. Many Huichols leave the Sierra to make pilgrimages, work as agricultural labourers, buy and sell goods, or visit relatives in the city. They return to the Sierra for ceremonies and to plant and harvest crops. Their migratory lifestyle may well be aboriginal; Weigand (1975:20) suggests that the Huichols were once travelling traders, who moved caravans of salt, shells, feathers, and peyote between the Pacific Ocean and the desert of San Luis Potosí.

The other principal conclusion from the artists' biographies is that the artists represent a range of shamanic experience. Most artists mentioned having parents or family members who were *mara'a kate;* thus the artists had grown up learning the Huichol traditions, and practicing the annual round of ceremonies. Some of the artists have become *mara'a kate* themselves; some are still in the process of becoming *mara'a kate;* and some have decided not to pursue a shamanic career for a variety of reasons. With this range of backgrounds, the degree of visionary ability these artists bring to their paintings varies as well.

Thus, one must conclude that most Huichol yarn painters grew up in a traditional setting; and had considerable exposure to their culture's practices during their youth. Many first left the Sierra or foothills in their early teens, and migrated to cities and Mestizo communities to work; after this time, they began practicing as artisans, although a period of training was required to learn the basic skills and begin developing a clientele for their work. For most artists, there continues to be considerable movement back and forth between Huichol settlements and the city; some artists have chosen to settle in Huichol territories, while others live mainly in the city; whichever location they choose, there is much visiting back and forth.

The characteristics of the artists I interviewed tend to disprove the theory that yarn paintings are produced mainly by acculturated individuals living in the city, who have little knowledge of the traditional culture. Rather I would suggest that the artists form a representative cross-section of Huichol culture today, and that the artists generally have strong roots in the traditional culture which they continue to maintain throughout their lives.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

[1] *Rio* means river in Spanish; hence the name Ríos. José Ríos Matsuwa is Lupe's mother's brother.

[2] Myerhoff (1968:17) gives a similar version of the story of how Lupe and Ramón met and married.

[3] Furst (1968-9:18) gives Ramon's age as 39 in 1965; but the dates which Lupe remembers would place Ramon's age as about 44 years in 1965. This calculation is based on her statement that she was born in about 1918, and that Ramon was a year younger than her.

[4] Mestizos are the descendents of Indians and Spaniards or acculturated Indians who no longer identify with an Indian community. They make up the majority of the Mexican population. Mestizo culture is generally identified more with its European than its Indian roots. Mestizos speak Spanish, and in rural areas often are in fierce competition with Indian communities for land and resources.

[5] *Compadrazgo* is a significant social relationship in Mexican custom, creating a network of personal ties in addition to blood relationships. It is based on the Catholic tradition of the godparent who sponsors a child for baptism in the church, but it has assumed wider meaning in Mexico. Madsen (1960:94-103) humorously describes how fiestas, marriages, children, and even a truck can have *compadres*.

[6] This story tells how *Watakame*, "The Clearer of Fields," escaped the flood in a boat. *Takutsi Nakawe*, Grandmother Growth, warned him of the flood and told him to take a little black dog with him in the ark. After the flood, the dog became a woman, and *Watakame* married her; their descendents were the Huichol people (Lumholtz 1902:v. 2, 191-193 tells one version of this story).

[7] The battle between Huichols and the surrounding Mestizos over the boundaries of the Huichol lands has raged for at least 150 years, since the Spanish government

withdrew from Mexico (Rojas 1992). It continues to be bitterly fought today, and erupts from time to time in press reports of Mestizo threats and violence against the Huichols (Rosa Rojas 1994a;1994b; Chávez and Arcos 1993).

CHAPTER 5
THE CONTENT AND SUBJECT MATTER OF YARN PAINTINGS

THE SUBJECTS OF THE PAINTINGS

In this section, I will examine the subject matter of the yarn paintings and how they may have changed over time. My goal here is to present trends, showing how new ideas were brought into the repertoire of designs used for yarn paintings; and the aesthetic choices which artists may have made in relation to the topics they choose to paint.

Over the years, the subject matter of yarn paintings has evolved. Furst (1978:26) notes that yarn paintings sold in the early 1960s portrayed a single symbol or a combination of symbols from the Huichol mythology, but had no particular narrative content. Plate 1, "Eagle and *Nierika*" is an example of the early style of yarn painting; it depicts a single eagle and a sun or *nierika* symbol with a patterned border around the edge. It is made with natural white and black wool, with a small amount of red. The wax shows through the yarn; and the empty space it creates is incorporated into the design, as in the eagle's heart area. The provenance of this painting is not known. Judging from its small size (about 20 cm x 10 cm) and rough execution, it could be either a sacred offering or a commercial painting.

Furst (1978:26) stresses Ramón Medina's role as an artistic innovator; an examination of paintings made by Ramón in the mid-1960s shows that this reputation seems fully justified. Furst encouraged Ramón to make yarn paintings that illustrated the Datura myth cycle they were taping (Furst and Myerhoff 1966). Ramón produced three paintings [1]: a woman being tempted by *Kieri* (Hui: *Datura*); the Deer-god *Tamatsi Kauyumari* shooting *Kieri* with an arrow; and *Kieri* in his death throes. These paintings seem to be the first representations of people and deities carrying out activities in a story. There are relatively few figures or objects in each painting; and these are the figures central to the narrative, such as a *Datura* plant, a fox, and a *takwatsi* (Hui: *mara'a kame*'s medicine basket). The landscape is suggested in two of the paintings, which show the rocks of a cliff or hill; however, these landscape elements are very roughly indicated with geometric blocks of coloured yarn; and for the most part, the figures seem to float in space.

Shortly after, Ramón expanded his subject range in a group of paintings commissioned by Furst (1968-9). Among the eighteen new paintings, seven are additional representations of myths, such as myths of the origin of the sun, or of how the Huichols acquired maize. According to Berrin (1978:154), one painting is a religious offering which Ramón made to take to *Wirikuta*; it is an oval *nierika*, with a round sun in the centre, and symbols relating to deities around the outside (Furst 1968-9:17; Berrin 1978:154).

Some of Ramón's paintings branch out in new directions. Four paintings (Furst 1968-9:20; one similar painting in Berrin 1978:163) illustrate the Huichol funeral ceremony and the journeys of the soul after death; these topics might be considered a depiction of ongoing events in the supernatural world rather than a myth per se. A fifth painting on the theme of death depicts the journey of a *mara'a kame*'s spirit after death (Furst 1968-9:19)--again a depiction of events or requirements in the supernatural world rather than a myth.

It is interesting to note that Lupe gave me a different interpretation of this painting. According to Lupe's interpretation, the painting represents the journey of a person hoping to become a *mara'a kame*, so that he or she may develop the ability to see the world of the gods[2]. This variation of interpretation demonstrates that different people may have their own individual interpretation of the meaning of a yarn painting.

One painting is of *Tatewari*, the Fire-god (Furst 1968-9:19; similar painting, Berrin 1978:139). It resembles early yarn paintings which are depictions of symbols representing deities; however, Lupe has told me that this painting represents an actual vision of how the Fire-god appears when shamans are communicating with it; it shows itself as a head or face with glowing eyes.

Perhaps most unique are a series of four paintings made after the anthropologists accompanied Ramón and Lupe on a peyote pilgrimage (Furst 1968-9:23). Three are a series of "self-portrayals," portraits of an individual interacting with the spiritual world; the fourth is an actual depiction of a peyote-induced vision. "The Hunt for the Peyote in *Wirikuta*" shows Ramón shooting peyote with an arrow as a part of the pilgrimage ceremony; the soul or life-force of the peyote is rising in a stream of colours, an event which Ramón claimed to see on a visionary level (Myerhoff 1974:154) Two paintings (also illustrated in Berrin 1978:66-67) show Myerhoff and Furst receiving the names of deities; Ramón claimed that these were depictions of dreams he experienced[3]. The fourth painting, which shows the fire exploding in multi-coloured flashes, represents a peyote vision, as Furst (1968-9:23) explains:

> The individual experience of the "dream" or visions induced by the peyote are [sic] considered too sacred to be discussed or shared,...Nevertheless, Ramón agreed to try to translate some of his peyote "dreams" into pictorial form, at least insofar as they pertained to the participating anthropologists who were not themselves of Ramón's culture and so were to some degree exempt from the ritual strictures of the peyote hunt. In this yarn painting Ramón shows how he experienced the fire, *Tatewari*,...the fire is shown exploding in a shower of multi-colored flashes and rays of great brilliance and luminescent splendor, each ray dissolving into its component colors. Below ground are *Tatewari*'s "roots", above, the night sky--a deep blue shot through with fiery reds--is turned into a blinding yellow, the color of the noonday sun in the desert sky.

Artistically, there is considerable evolution in Ramón's paintings, from a few crudely drawn figures floating in space in the *Datura* series to the considerably more sophisticated four paintings of dreams and visions experienced during the peyote hunt. The graphic power of many of the paintings is considerable. They use strong geometric shapes which organize the other figures in the painting. A triangle shape dominates some, such as "The Dead Soul's Journey to the Spirit World"; circles dominate others, such as two paintings illustrating punishments for sexual offenses (Furst 1968-9:23). The graphic appeal of Ramón's paintings is such that they continue to be reproduced. Some Huichol artists continue to sell copies of his paintings today [4]; and I have seen his designs used on a book jacket and on T-shirts, which are selling briskly in Mexico.

Ramón and Lupe taught other Huichols the art of yarn painting, as described above; and so the style and subjects they originated remained influential during that decade. This element can be seen in several collections of yarn paintings made during the 1970s. One collection of forty paintings was purchased in Tepic in 1977-79, and exhibited in Vancouver in 1980. The catalogue (Knox and Maud 1980) is available as a black and white photocopied pamphlet only; however, it is valuable for research because it illustrates the paintings and gives the artist's names, the Spanish text written on the back, and a reasonably accurate English translation [5]. A number of the paintings are slightly modified copies of Ramón's paintings, such as the story of the dead soul in the spirit world, or the face of the Fire-god. In addition to Ramón's repertoire, several show pilgrimages to sacred sites such as Lake Chapala or *Wirikuta;* and specify the offerings which should be made there. Most of the paintings depict deities, myths, and ceremonies. Some show what might be considered more mundane themes, such as protecting the corn field from wolves, hunting bees, or drinking corn beer after clearing the fields. However, since most activities relating to cultivating corn are specifically ceremonial, and bees and wolves also have religious significance, it is likely that these paintings also refer to religious themes. One painting is an oddity; it shows hallucinogenic mushrooms, with coloured energy streams coming from them. Since there is no record of the Huichols using hallucinogenic mushrooms [6], one wonders if this theme referred to mushroom use among other Mexican Indians such as the Mazatecs (Wasson et al. 1974).

A second collection useful for assessing paintings of the 1970s is the Gruhn-Bryan collection. These paintings were purchased in about 1974-75 and brought to Edmonton, Alberta [7]. Seventeen of the paintings are now owned by the anthropologists Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan; Plates 3 to 8 illustrate five paintings from this collection. None imitate published paintings by Ramón Medina [8]. All show myths, ceremonies, or subjects surrounded with ceremonial meaning such as corn, deer, peyote, and *nierikas*. It could be argued that one painting of a single bird may not be sacred; according to Zingg (1938:194-7), many, if not all, animals are assigned to a Huichol deity, and considered to be the deity's animal--even animals introduced by Europeans such as cows and sheep. It is likely that even a yarn painting showing a single animal could be linked to a particular deity.

A third collection from the 1970s is *Art of the Huichol Indians* (Berrin 1978), the catalogue of a museum exhibition in San Francisco. This catalogue reproduces many of the paintings by Ramón Medina and Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos which were published previously and described above; and contains several new paintings by Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos, José Benítez Sánchez, Cresencio Pérez Robles, and Hakatemi [9]. All the paintings depict religious themes, such as deities, myths, and ceremonies.

One painting is unusual: a painting by Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos of "How the Husband Assists in the Birth of a Child." It shows a man in the rafters of a house, with a cord tied to his testicles. As the woman goes into labour, she pulls on the cord "so that her husband shared in the painful, but ultimately joyous, experience of childbirth" (Berrin 1978:162). There has been some question about what custom this painting refers to, since there is no record of Huichols actually practicing this custom. Schaefer (1990:204-5) records that she could not find anyone who knew of the practice; and cites a personal communication from Furst, who said that it may come from an old trickster legend about *Tamatsi Kauyumari*. Whether it refers to a myth or a practiced custom, this painting has entered the yarn painting repertoire and become a popular theme for artists to reproduce. I photographed several versions of it in 1993-4.

During the 1970s, the artist José Benítez Sánchez seems to have originated another type of painting, which has also become a part of the yarn painting repertoire. This painting might be characterized as a representation of supernatural cosmology, a form of supernatural "map." Negrín (1979:19) shows an early, quite simple version of this painting called "The Womb of the World"; it uses the "stick-figure" style of Ramón Medina, which José Benítez also used in his early paintings. The painting shows the world as the giant womb of the Earth-goddess, *Tatei Yurianaka*, with deities being placed in different parts of the world. The Fire-god, the Sun-god, the Deer-god, and the Vulture-god each occupy a position in the four directions, while the centre is occupied by edible plants and animals placed there for people to eat. The world is surrounded with the water of the oceans, and four eagles guard the four corners of the earth.

Subsequently, Benítez has produced more elaborate versions of this cosmological description of the world and the deities which inhabit it. Negrín (1986:48 [10],61-64) illustrates an extremely complex painting, "*Vista, Vida y Alma de la Tierra* (Sp: The Vision, Life, and Soul of the Earth)," using the sinuous style of intertwining elements which Benítez evolved during the 1970s. The painting has a lengthy explanation which sets out many concepts of Huichol cosmology, such as the idea of *Tatei Yurianaka* as a "patio" on which the supernatural forces play out their activities, and *kupuri* (Hui: life-energy) erupting in a continuous fountain which feeds all living beings. A portion of the longer description of this painting gives an idea of its content.

> Our Mother the fertile Earth (Hui: *Tatei Yurianaka*) is the "patio" which the “gods,” our great-grandparents, occupy in this world. They built and established their sacred sites on her. Our Mother is like a huge bowl that

> nourishes the life of the world. Her boundaries extend as far as that place where the heart and thoughts (Hui: *iyari*) of our great-grandparents can be heard. In reality, our Mother is like a sacred disk of stone (Hui: *nierika*), which is the navel of the gods. The large white ring defines the circumference of the Fertile Earth: it is sown with symbols that represent vision (Hui: *nierika*, represented as little blue spheres) and the spiritual life (Hui: *tukari* represented as little yellow flowers) of our collective Forefathers. The center [a blue circle] is the collective soul (Hui: *kupuri*), the only source of all life. (Negrín 1986:61-62; my translation)

This painting is perhaps one of the most sophisticated expressions of Huichol cosmology to be published.

The idea of the cosmological painting was adopted by other yarn painters. It forms a basic theme in yarn paintings by Mariano Valadez in the 1980s. However, Mariano's cosmological paintings tend to be more of the physical earth as we know it--the sky, land, and sea--rather than the purely supernatural geography of José Benítez. One of Mariano's most important cosmological paintings is of the goddess *Takutsi* giving birth to all life (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992:20-21). It shows the goddess in the centre with the birds and butterflies of the air above her, the animals of the land in the middle, and the fish of the ocean against a blue-green background below her. Two humans suckle at the goddess' breasts, while two more children are being born.

Like Benítez's paintings of *Tatei Yurianaka*, Mariano's painting depicts the Huichol goddess as the source of life, creating and feeding the creatures of the world. However, Mariano's painting is much more representational than Benítez'. The animals are drawn more realistically; and it is the animals themselves which are represented rather than abstract concepts such as *kupuri* (Hui: life-energy). Subsequently, Mariano developed the theme of the cosmological painting; Eger Valadez and Valadez (1992:18,34,96) illustrates several paintings which use the imagery of sky, earth, and ocean, such as "After the Great Flood," "Peyote Provides Knowledge and Abundance," and "The Rain Shamans."

Another type of painting which appears in the yarn painting repertoire during the 1970s or early 1980s is a version of the *nierika* which resembles an oriental mandala. This type of painting uses the circular *nierika* form, which is basic to the religious offerings; it has a circular design with a hole or "eye" in the centre, and symbols important to the deity around the circumference. The modern mandala *nierika* retains this basic form, but is considerably more elaborate; like an oriental mandala, it is quite symmetrical and formal with a repetitive design. It is very close to abstract art, since it is almost purely colour and shape without the narrative content of the myth-telling yarn paintings.

One form of the mandala *nierika* is a painting of pure colour, depicting supernatural energies with only slight reference to any representational symbols. Plate 15, "The Mirror which Helps the *mara'a kame* to Heal," shows a painting made by Eligio Carrillo in the late 1970s or early 1980s. It shows the energies emanating from a mirror (also called a *nierika*) which Huichol *mara'a kate* use during ceremonies. This is one of a series of similar paintings Eligio made, with variations in colour. It is apparent that this painting approaches abstract art, being almost purely colour and shape.

Mariano Valadez uses the mandala *nierika* form in "Peyote Nealika" [11] (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992:40), which shows strobing multi-coloured energies, and animals which have religious significance such as snakes and lizards, radiating out of a central mirror; in this painting, the design is quite abstract, and symmetrical. Mariano Valadez develops the theme of colourful energies radiating out of a centre in other paintings, such as "Peyote Enlightenment" and "The Rain Shamans" (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992:76,96); however, these paintings are more representational, and illustrate ceremonies.

I am not certain which artist originated the mandala *nierika*; perhaps Eligio Carrillo or Mariano Valadez, or perhaps another artist. The fully symmetrical *nierika* does not appear in the three collections I have cited from the 1970s. However, the concept of multi-coloured radiating energies which the *nierika* mandala portrays may have its roots in Ramón Medina's painting of his peyote vision of the fire; this seems to be the first yarn painting to depict multi-coloured radiating energy, although Ramón did not use the symmetrical, circular form. The theme of multi-coloured radiating energies can be seen in paintings of the 1970s such as the "The Birth of the Sun-god at *Reunar*, a Volcano in *Wirikuta*" by Urra Temai (Plate 4). From there, it was only a step to combine the circle form and the idea of radiating energy.

Now I will turn to the paintings I photographed in 1993-4; these include about 250 paintings and yarn-painted objects such as drums or masks. In these paintings, most of the types described above continue to be made. Myths, ceremonies, and depictions of deities remain popular; and are among the most commonly used themes. Plate 36 shows a representation of a myth, Alejandro López de la Torre's painting of the origin of the world, "The Story of the Ark of *Takutsi Nakawe*." It is interesting to notice the similarity in design between this painting and Eligio Carrillo's abstract mandala *nierika* in Plate 15. "*Yokawima*, Mother of the Deer" by Gonzálo Hernández (Plate 35) represents a deity with her animals, and the offerings which are appropriate to her. Two versions of the Drum Ceremony are José Castro's "The First Day of the Drum Ceremony" (Plate 32) and "The Spirits come to the Drum during the Ceremony" by José Isabel (Chavelo) González de la Cruz (Plate 12).

In the depictions of myths and ceremonies, the artists often strive for accuracy and completeness of detail. When they paint myths, they try to show all the main characters of the story. When they paint Huichol ceremonies, they try to make sure that all the required offerings for the ceremony are shown, as well as the main actors and activities. For example, José Castro's painting of the Huichol celebration of the first fruits of the harvest, "The First Day of the Drum Ceremony" (Plate 32), shows the required offerings in the centre foreground, including an arch decorated with pink flowers, bowls of deer and fish soup, "god's eyes," and squash, new corn, beans, and watermelon. I attended one of these ceremonies in San Andrés, and the layout of offerings and arrangement of the people was very similar to that depicted in the painting. Thus, the paintings might be considered as a type of visual *aide-memoire*, a guide to the myth, ceremony, or story, and a list of its important elements.

The mandala *nierika* has become an important item of commerce; several artists turn them out on almost an assembly line basis. It is probably a particularly easy design to reproduce because of the standardized circular shape and repeating symbols. José Benítez produced many variations on this theme, such as Plate 22, "Through Peyote, We see the *Nierika* of the Three Worlds." Eligio Carrillo produced a number of paintings of this type, although with a much greater range of colours and images; and a number of other artists produced imaginative variations on this design, such as Santos' "The Deer-god *Kauyumari* with Guardian Snakes" (Plate 27).

The "land, sea, and sky" cosmological painting, apparently originated by Mariano Valadez, has become a popular theme also. It is made by artists who studied with Mariano; and it has been adopted by artists who have not studied with him, such as Modesto Rivera who produced the dramatic version, "Black Rain *Nierika*" (Plate

19).

Some yarn paintings were original or unique; that is, I saw only one such painting, and the paintings have no real history in the yarn painting tradition. Plate 25, "*Nierika* Symbols which Huichols Paint on their Faces in Ceremonies" by Santos Daniel Carrillo Jiménez is an almost fully abstract painting of the *nierika* face paintings, such as those illustrated by Lumholtz (1900:196-203). The different *nierika* symbols are arranged in rows, using a single colour; the painting has a pronounced similarity to western abstract art, as one dealer reflected in her comment, "Mondrian couldn't have done it better." [12] I was told that this painting was the suggestion of an art dealer. At the moment, this painting seems to be unique in the Huichol repertoire; one painting was made, and some copies of the same painting may have been made. However, if the design sells well, Santos and other Huichols may start to make more like it; and a new design will enter the Huichol artistic repertoire.

A second unusual painting is the yarn-painted "Christ on the Cross" shown in Plate 39. This was on display at the Basilica of Zapopan, and may have been created for the church; the artist was said to be a Huichol invalid living in Guadalajara. This yarn painting, with its Christian subject matter, does not reflect what is usually thought to be Huichol tradition; however, it may reflect modern religious practice in the Sierra. There is a very active cult of saints, which are Christ figures on crosses [13]; I saw these wooden saints displayed in the church in San Andrés, and used extensively in ceremonies such as the *Fiesta de Pachitas*. It appears that the wooden statues have an important place in the ceremonial life of the Sierra [14]. Therefore, a yarn-painted version of a Christ is not necessarily a sign of non-Huichol imagery. It may grow out of what is "traditional" Huichol culture in the Sierra today.

Occasionally I have seen other examples of yarn painting with Christian themes; for example, one Huichol who had joined a Protestant evangelical group showed me his yarn painting of Noah and his ark full of animals; he identified it as Noah rather than the Huichol story of *Nakawe* and her ark. I would speculate that the reason Huichols make few yarn paintings on Christian themes is that western buyers do not want them because they are not "Indian" enough.

Finally, I collected several paintings which were attributed directly to visionary experiences. Plate 14, "The *Mara'a kame* talks to the Deer-God at Night" by Eligio Carrillo shows a *mara'a kame* in ceremony talking to a giant deer, which hovers over the fire; the colours represent the *mara'a kame*'s power, which lights up the night sky like a search-light. The idea of the power lighting up the sky at night is similar to that expressed by Ramón Medina in his painting of a peyote vision of the fire and described above (Furst 1968-9:23). I have also heard Huichols describe experiences of the deer manifesting itself during a ceremony and talking to the participants.

Plate 34, "*Reunar*, the Sacred Mountain in *Wirikuta*, Transforms into an Eagle" by Gonzálo Hernández shows a vision of *Reunar*, the volcano in *Wirikuta* which is the birthplace of the sun. It transforms into an eagle with messenger serpents coming out of it. The painting is particularly elegant, since the curves of the eagle's wings duplicate the curving slopes of the mountain. Again, the artist's description of the vision duplicates visions which other Huichols have also recounted to me concerning messenger snakes emerging and coming towards pilgrims in *Wirikuta*.

Thus, by 1993, the major subject categories of yarn paintings are well-established. They include depictions of events happening in the world of the gods, and especially stories, myths, or legends; fairly explicit drawings of actual ceremonies and pilgrimages performed by Huichols, often cataloguing the required offerings and activities; the cosmological paintings, such as José Benítez' supernatural map or Mariano Valadez' land, sea and sky paintings; the mandala *nierikas*, which are moving towards pure abstraction; and the paintings of actual visions such as those of Ramón Medina or the more recent examples which I photographed. Finally, there are a few paintings such as the yarn-painted Christ on the Cross, which do not deal with aboriginal Huichol cultural themes, but which may reflect what has become modern Huichol culture.

From the subject list presented here, it is clear that the artists consider it most appropriate to use yarn paintings to portray religious topics. There are only a few yarn paintings which do not clearly represent religious themes or subjects; Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos' painting "How the Husband Assists in the Birth of a Child" (Berrin 1978:162), some paintings of single animals, and several paintings of activities such as clearing corn fields and hunting bees. However, as I have discussed, it is likely that even these paintings have religious associations.

Hence, religious subjects are primary. Everyday or natural events, such as daily life in a village or nature scenes and landscapes, do not appear in yarn paintings. The history of commercial yarn paintings show that they were not abstract art; that is, pure form without content. They were always representational paintings. Now some paintings may be on the edge of becoming abstract or non-representational. Some paintings, such as the mandala *nierikas* of Eligio Carrillo and José Benítez, or Santos Daniel's Mondrian-like facial *nierikas*, are on the edge of losing their link with empirical referents and becoming purely an exercise in colour and design.

The subject categories for yarn paintings which I have developed here are an arbitrary exercise--a pragmatic way of organizing the paintings so that they might be understandable to the reader. Huichol artists may have their own ways of categorizing yarn paintings which are different from the categories I have used here. This is an area in which further research might prove revealing; for example, several times during interviews I noticed that artists categorized their paintings by the particular ceremony or myth. The artist might say, "I know how to make a yarn painting of the Drum Ceremony, the Fiesta of the Peyote, the Birth of the Sun," and so on. Evidently the artists were most interested in the ceremonies or myths, and used these as the basis of their categorization. Even more specifically, they seemed to see the most significant aspect of the paintings as the offerings which were presented to the gods. Thus, in telling me about their paintings, the artists might list what offerings should be presented at each ceremony; and how they had represented the offerings in the yarn painting, not omitting any. I have touched on this role above, suggesting that the yarn paintings may almost serve as a form of *aide-memoire*, or perhaps as a historical record of what the artists consider important in the Huichol tradition.

This focus on offerings echoes an experience I had in San Andrés. A young man invited me to attend a ceremony at a rancho near San Andrés, and asked me to bring my camera so he could take pictures. Since there were fairly strict rules against picture-taking in the ceremonial centre, and I knew that some people disliked being photographed, I gave the camera to the young man and told him to take whatever pictures he wanted. Interestingly, three of four photographs he chose to take were of the same thing, the family offerings. His choice may reflect the relative importance of the offerings in ceremonies, and hence may be linked to their relative importance in the eyes of the yarn painters.

IMAGERY IN YARN PAINTINGS

In order to convey stories and ideas, the yarn painters use a basic vocabulary of images. Once one is familiar with these images, and the mythology they refer to, it is possible to "read" a yarn painting with some confidence. While the specific meaning of the painting should depend on the artist's interpretation, the general "gist" can be often surmised from the combinations of images. Each painter has his or her own style of portraying these images but they tend to be variations on a theme. In general, there is a remarkable consistency in what objects are considered important and how they are portrayed.

Many images in yarn paintings are drawn from the plants and animals which surround the Huichols and make up part of their daily life. Other images are drawn from the objects used in ceremonies and religious practices. Still others are gods and goddesses from mythology. These images are portrayed in a style which ranges from somewhat realistic to highly stylized.

Animals are often portrayed realistically. Plate 7, "Sacrificing a Bull for Longevity" by Heucame, shows a recognizable black and white bull with horns. Plate 2, "Huichol Star Constellations," by Eliseo Castro Villa, shows a group of animals including a recognizable fish, scorpion, and bird together with several four-legged animals which are described as a deer and a tiger. Mariano Valadez has made a specialty of portraying animals; his painting of the "Goddess of Life" (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992:20) shows many types of animals, as do the popular sky, land, and sea paintings such as Modesto Rivera's "Black Rain *Nierika*" (Plate 19).

Animals, plants, and objects may also be portrayed in a more cartoon-like way. A deer may depicted with four legs, a squarish body, horns, and an uplifted tail, as in Plate 5, "*Mara'a kame* Singing to the Deer-god during the Fiesta of *Esquite* (Sp: toasted dry corn)" by M. González. Another variation of the deer which is used frequently in yarn paintings is a frontal outline of its head only, as in Plate 8, "The Temple of the Deer-god" attributed to Heucame. A corn plant is often shown with a tall stalk, ears of corn, and a pronounced tassel as in Plate 3, "The Goddess of the Corn-field" by Cristobal González. The elongated corn ears alone, with their tassels, are shown in Plate 6, "Offerings of Corn and *Nierikas*, ready to be Blessed" by Reymundo de la Rosa. Occasionally, yarn paintings show recognizable domestic objects such as a jug holding blood from the bull in Plate 7, "Sacrificing a Bull for Longevity"; or bowls holding the ceremonial deer-soup in Plate 32, "The First Day of the Drum Ceremony" by José Castro.

Some artists draw human beings and deities in a stick-figure manner that resembles children's drawings: the figures have round heads, with eyes, nose, or mouth sketched in; squarish bodies, and stick-like hands and feet. Variations on this style can be seen in Plate 5, "*Mara'a kame* Singing to the Deer-god during the Fiesta of *Esquite,*" and Plate 12, "The Spirits come to the Drum during the Ceremony" by José Isabel (Chavelo) González de la Cruz. The stick-figure style of portraying human beings seems to have originated with Ramón Medina, and is used in many of his paintings. Subsequent artists have copied his style, so that it has become a convention in yarn painting.

Since Ramón Medina, other artists have evolved variations on this way of portraying human figures. José Benítez has developed a rather cartoon-like half animal/half man; he also represents humans with skeletal parts showing, as can be seen in Plates 21 and 23, both untitled works. Francisco Bautista draws people with strong geometric shapes, such as triangles or circles, often with hair streaming out in geometrical shapes, as can be seen in the figure of a woman with red hair at the bottom of Plate 30, "Sun." Francisco Bautista's geometric style of representing human figures has been adopted by artists from San Andrés such as Gonzálo Hernández, in Plate 35, which shows a triangular shaped "*Yokawima*, Mother of the Deer."

Some artists use a more realistic depiction of the human figure, showing mass and volume of the body. Heucame, an artist of the 1970s, uses such a depiction in Plate 7, "Sacrificing a Bull for Longevity"; this style remains popular, and is used for all the human figures of men, women, and children in José Castro's "The First Day of the Drum Ceremony" (Plate 32).

Natural phenomena such as clouds and rain, or landscape elements such as rocks and mountains, are also portrayed in yarn paintings. Rocks, cliffs, or mountains may be shown as multi-coloured squares or rectangles, piled up against each other, This image seems to have been introduced by Ramón Medina as well; it first appears in two of his *Datura* paintings (Furst 1968-9:24), and subsequently entered the design vocabulary. However, Zingg's (1938:629) description of a mythical yarn painting made by the Deer-god *Tamatsi Kauymari* also refers to multi-coloured rocks. Plate 12, "The Spirits come to the Drum during the Ceremony" shows the square-shaped rocks at the lower left. Mariano Valadez has drawn caves in a similar way, with the rocks on the outside, in "The Sacred Cave of Mystical Powers" (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992:48). Mountains may be depicted in this way, or as curving masses, as in David González Sánchez' "The Four Mountains Represent Powers of the Gods" (Plate 18).

Clouds are shown by wavy lines or masses of blue or grey in the sky; they may have rain coming out of them, either as wiggly lines or serpents. A version of this element can be seen in Plate 33, "The Deer Dance in *Wirikuta* and Create Rain" by José Bautista Carrillo, which shows clouds and rain in the sky; another version is shown in Plate 29, "*Aykutsi*, the Eagle which gives Rain" by José Bautista Carrillo, which shows clouds surrounding the sun, and jagged lines descending from the clouds. A third version is "Black Rain *Nierika*" (Plate 19) with its dominating band of rain in the centre.

Even though many animals and natural phenomena are sketchy, they are usually recognizable to a western viewer. However, there is another group of objects which are important ceremonial implements for the Huichol. Since these are unfamiliar to western viewers, they are more difficult to recognize. An explanation is necessary to know what they are. Some implements are objects used in ceremonies, such as the *tépu*, a three-legged log drum shown in Plates 12 and 32, which depict the *mara'a kame* beating the drum in the harvest ceremony. Berrin (1978:180) provides a photograph of this drum for comparison. *Katira* (Hui: candles) are used as offerings to the gods, and in ceremonies; a lighted white candle can be seen in Plate 7, "Sacrificing a Bull for Longevity"; a row of four candles is shown at the bottom left of Plate 18, "The Four Mountains Represent Powers of the Gods."

A third implement is the *ürü* (Hui: prayer arrow) which is used to communicate prayers to the gods. Prayer arrows are made of a bamboo cane, with a v-shaped notch at the top; they sometimes have a brazil-wood tip. Traditional designs include horizontal bands of colour and zig-zags running along the length. Lumholtz (1900: Plate III) and Berrin (1978:169-171) illustrate types of prayer arrow. Prayer arrows can be seen pegged in the ground in front of the women and children in Plate 32, "The First Day of the Drum Ceremony." A particularly felicitous use of the design is found in Plate 4, "The Birth of the Sun-god at *Reunar*, a Volcano in *Wirikuta*" by Urra Temai; the sides of the volcano are formed by two prayer arrows.

Similar to prayer arrows, but not the same, are *muwieri* (Hui: shaman's plumes) which are made of a brazil-wood stick with two feathers attached to the top, as seen in a photograph in Berrin (1978:172). In yarn paintings, *muwieri* are indicated by a straight stick with an oval feather hanging from the top. *Muwieri* are pegged into the ground beside prayer arrows in Plate 32, "The First Day of the Drum Ceremony." The *mara'a kate* hold *muwieri* aloft in their hands in Plate 7, "Sacrificing a Bull for Longevity" and Plate 18, "The Four Mountains Represent Powers of the Gods."

In some ceremonies, two *muwieri* are worn like deer horns by the *mara'a kate*, who tuck them into a head band or hat; Plate 12, "The Spirits come to the Drum during the Ceremony" shows a *mara'a kame* wearing *muwieri*. The *muwieri* are a means of communicating directly with the deities such as the Deer-spirit; and Plate 5, "*Mara'a kame* Singing to the Deer-god during the Fiesta of *Esquite*" shows this communication taking place between the deities and the *mara'a kame*, shown at bottom left wearing two stylized *muwieri*.

The image of a *mara'a kame* with *muwieri* should be differentiated from a human figure with deer horns on it, seen in the upper right of Plate 5. A human with deer horns represents *Tamatsi Kauyumari*, the culture hero and Deer-god. *Tamatsi Kauyumari* is just one of the deities represented in yarn paintings. *Tatewari*, the Fire-god, is also shown. He is represented by a face or head with glowing eyes, in the middle of a fire, as seen in the lower right of Plate 5.

Huichols have a number of goddess figures, who represent the earth; rain; and the water of lakes, rivers, springs, and the ocean. Plate 3, "The Goddess of the Corn-field" shows the head of the goddess, depicted as a woman; and José Benítez Sánchez illustrates three goddesses in "The Divine Mothers" (Berrin 1978:155). *Takutsi Nakawe* or Grandmother Growth, the origin goddess, is often shown as an old woman with white hair and a bamboo cane which appears to represent an animal head (Lumholtz 1902:v, 2, 162-4). Plate 36, "The Story of the Ark of *Takutsi Nakawe*" by Alejandro López de la Torre, shows *Takutsi Nakawe* and her cane in the front of the ark.

The sun appears in many paintings, reflecting its importance to the Huichol; and is both a representation of the sun itself and the Sun-god. It is shown as a circle with radiating lines around it; and it is common to see a human face depicting eyes, mouth, and nose, as in Plate 30, "Sun." Often the sun is shown with a deer on either side, as in Plate 9, "Sun and Four Deer" by José Isabel (Chavelo) González de la Cruz. This is a modern version of one of the most ancient of yarn painting images, the *nierika* guarded by two deer. A sacred offering which depicts the traditional sun or *nierika* guarded by deer can be seen in Berrin (1978:152 left). Unlike the popular sun, the moon and stars appear in few paintings. The yarn painters Tutukila (Negrin 1979:21) and Mariano Valadez paint moons and stars in a western way, with the moon as a crescent, and stars as five-pointed figures, as shown in "The Sacred Cave of Mystical Powers" (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992:48).

Two hallucinogenic plants play an important role in Huichol religion. The peyote cactus is often shown as a circle with white dots; sometimes these appear as radiating rays of dots in the shape of a cross; its shape is much like a *nierika*, and reflects peyote's role as one of the entry points into the world of the deities. Plate 27, "The Deer-god *Kauyumari* with Guardian Snakes" shows a large peyote in the centre, surrounded by a ring of peyotes. A peyote with deer horns, reflecting its capacity to transform into a deer, is shown in Plate 20, "The Deer-god *Kauyumari* Emerges at Midnight"; in Plate 17, "Sacred Symbols of *Wirikuta*" by Cristobal González, peyote is shown forming the body of the deer.

The second hallucinogenic plant is called *Kieri*; according to Furst (1989), this is not the *Datura inoxia* of Ramón Medina's evil *Kieri* series, but another species of *Solandra* which is beneficient. It is often depicted with bright yellow flowers, growing on rocks or a cliff in the paintings of Mariano Valadez (Eger Valadez and Valadez 1992:64,66,80,86,90; a version with multi-coloured flowers, reflecting the concept that there is more than one kind and colour of *Kieri* flower (Furst 1989:162,165-7), is shown in the upper right of Plate 33, "The Deer Dance in *Wirikuta* and Create Rain."

Finally one notes wavy lines. These may denote singing or communication between humans and deities, as in Plate 5, "*Mara'a kame* Singing to the Deer-god during the Fiesta of *Esquite*," which is particularly elegant. It shows the multiple levels of communication that actually occur during a ceremony; that is, the *mara'a kame* appears to be communicating simultaneously with the Fire-god, with *Tamatsi Kauyumari*, the Deer-god, and with the power of the deer itself. Radiating wavy lines also indicate the powers or energies of deities and religious sites; they can be seen surrounding the head of a deity in Plate 17, "Sacred Symbols of *Wirikuta*," and radiating from the volcano in Plate 4, "The Birth of the Sun-god at *Reunar*, a Volcano in *Wirikuta*."

These are some of the main images used in yarn paintings; but this list is by no means exhaustive. It is meant to suggest the way Huichols use imagery in yarn painting, rather than to catalogue all possible images. Eger Valadez and Valadez

(1992:100-108) have compiled an illustrated list of symbols which extends the list I have presented here.

It seems that, in the yarn paintings, the Huichols have evolved, and probably are still evolving, a pictorial vocabulary to depict their religious world view. While some of the design elements, such as two deer facing a *nierika*, are old, and appear in offerings and artifacts collected by Lumholtz and Zingg, many other images appear to be modern innovations. The stylized *mara'a kame* with head plumes is one such innovation; and does not seem to appear in museum artifacts, nor in traditional Huichol weaving or embroidery designs.

The combination of the designs to tell stories is also new. It seems that new figures and elements are being added to the vocabulary by innovative artists; then adopted by other artists. Examples include paintings such as the land, sea, and sky *nierika*, as well as the use of yarn paintings to depict myths and ceremonies.

The way the Huichols draw their figures may also reveal their aesthetic choices. The style of representation used in yarn painting ranges from somewhat realistic to cartoon-like. The level of realism never approaches the realistic standard of European art, whose goal is to imitate the perspective, the textures, and the colours of objects almost as the human eye sees them--a tradition which Anderson (1990:202-208) calls the European "mimetic" tradition [15].

One way that European art has attempted to create realism which mimics the way the human eye sees is through the use of perspective. Perspective creates an illusion of depth, showing objects in relation to each other in space; for example, nearby objects are depicted as larger and distant objects as smaller. Most yarn paintings lack perspective completely. They are flat and one-dimensional; objects float in space, and most objects are more or less the same size regardless of where they are located in the painting. Occasionally one sees an effort to show some depth; Plate 7, "Sacrificing a Bull for Longevity," shows a larger *mara'a kame* in the foreground, a mid-sized bull in the middle, and a small temple in the background. It is becoming slightly more common to see yarn paintings which portray somewhat realistic scenes, such as a group of people participating in a ceremony, as in Plate 32, "The First Day of the Drum Ceremony."

The lack of perspective reflects the lack of emphasis on realism in Huichol art. Aesthetically, it does not seem important to the Huichols to mimic human vision, or to depict objects in space.

The degree of realistic representation varies. Plants, animals, and household objects are most likely to be rendered somewhat realistically. There is also a vocabulary of somewhat symbolic images, such as shaman's plumes, prayer arrows, and *nierikas*. Deities and spirits are depicted with human forms; or as a *mara'a kame* might actually see them in a vision, such as the Deer-god in Plate 14, "The *Mara'a kame* talks to the Deer-God at Night," or the eagle in Plate 34, "*Reunar*, the Sacred Mountain in *Wirikuta*, Transforms into an Eagle."

The Huichol yarn paintings represent simultaneously beings and objects which have their existence in the everyday reality, and beings which exist in the alternate reality. The two forms of reality are shown using the same style or method of depiction; a flat, slightly cartoon-like idiom, all on one plane. This cartoon-like effect may shift somewhat towards realism for things of the everyday world, but does not have to.

This method of representation suggests a Huichol cosmological view of the world, in which things of the spirit and things of the everyday exist simultaneously in the same plane. The two forms of reality penetrate each other; just as in the yarn paintings, the images of humans and deities interact with each other.

The composition of yarn painting designs also reflect the aesthetic preferences of the Huichol artists. By composition, I mean the arrangement of the figures in space and in relation to each other. At first, when I looked at yarn paintings, they appeared to be a jumble of figures. Figures are dotted around the painting from side to side and up and down. The paintings do have a top and a bottom, since human and animal figures are shown standing with feet towards the bottom and head to the top. Nevertheless, the figures do not congregate on the bottom; that is, they do not look as though they were standing on the ground. By contrast, in a realistic painting, the ground would be at the bottom of the painting, the sky at the top, and a person would be standing on the ground. In a yarn paintings, a standing person may be at the bottom, middle, or top. Thus, the figures may appear jumbled because they are not organized according to the convention of alignment with the ground.

However, after looking at the paintings for a while, I began to realize that there may be other conventions organizing the figures. For Huichols, the five directions are an important religious concept: east, west, north, south, and the center which represents the sky above and the earth below. The five directions appear to be the principle organizing the figures in some yarn paintings.

This organizational principle can be seen most clearly in Plate 6, "Offerings of Corn and *Nierikas*, ready to be Blessed" by Reymundo de la Rosa. The centre point is strongly marked; there is a *nierika* in the middle, and diagonal lines run from each corner through the middle. In each of the four directions, there is a figure: two *nierikas* in the east and west, and two corn ears in the north and south. Thus, the painting is emphasizing the five directions, with the diagonal lines intersecting from each corner. A very similar composition in a painting of the 1990s can be seen in Plate 31, "When the *Mara'a kame* eats Peyote, He Sees Everything which Exists."

Plate 5, "*Mara'a kame* Singing to the Deer-god during the Fiesta of *Esquite*," follows the same pattern. There is a figure in each of the four corners; and the centre is defined not only by the song line forming one diagonal, but also by the textural blocks of colour going in the other. This use of positive and negative space intersects at the centre.

The four directions, the intersecting diagonals, and the centre are one basic shape used by yarn painters. This is a harmonious and balanced geometric figure; thus, even to western eyes, the paintings appear balanced and aesthetically pleasing. This shape is also central to Huichol cosmology; thus, one can say that in their basic composition, the Huichols are expressing their world view.

The four directions, with centre and intersecting diagonals, appears to be one of the basic design structures in Huichol art; and learning it starts at an early age. For example, Berrin (1978:42) presents four embroidery swatches, illustrating the first designs taught to young girls. Three of the four swatches use the design of the five directions. Three out of a group of four embroidered bags (Berrin 1978:201) employ the same theme at a higher level of skill.

As one looks at the designs taught to young girls, and at woven and embroidered bags (Berrin 1978:42, 201), it becomes apparent that there are other basic Huichol designs which have also been transposed into yarn painting. A second design consists of rows of horizontal bands of repeating figures, such as bands of eagles or deer found on embroidered clothes (Berrin 1978:192) or in weaving (Berrin 1978:190,197). These horizontal bands of repeated figures form a second basic yarn painting composition. José Benítez Sanchez' "The Divine Mothers" (Berrin, 1978:155) and Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos' "The Five Sacred Colours of Maize" (Berrin, 1978:159) both use this composition.

A third pattern closely related to traditional designs is the circular or mandala *nierika*. In yarn painting, the basic *nierika* shape takes the form of a main central figure, often round with radiating rays, and with related symbols repeated around the circumference. There is some resemblance to the *nierika* in the designs of weaving and embroidery, such as a bag with a single large figure in the centre and smaller related figures around it (Berrin 1978:201, lower left and right). However, the closest relatives to the *nierika* design as it appears in yarn paintings are found in other religious objects and offerings. One model is the carved stone disk placed over the door of the temple, on the altar of the rxiriki (Hui: small god-house), or over sacred cavities [16]; Lumholtz (1900:25-60) describes and illustrates many versions of these disks, whose designs bear a striking resemblance to modern *nierika* yarn paintings. Similar designs may be found in the circular ceremonial offerings made of wool wrapped around sticks which Lumholtz (1900:108-134) called "front-shields" (also called *nierika* in Huichol); and in the designs of *rukuri* (Hui: gourd shell votive bowls) which use designs of beads or yarn pressed into beeswax (Lumholtz 1900:161-168).

The geometric figures, such as the mandala *nierika*, cross shape, or repeating rows, are probably easier types of designs to reproduce. It is more difficult to produce irregular designs or shapes, especially ones which are meaningful in themselves. Such designs take considerably more thought to make, and one tends to see fewer of these paintings. One exquisite version of a meaningful shape is Plate 17, "Sacred Symbols of *Wirikuta*" by Cristobal González, in which *trompe l'oeil* [17] bands of colour incorporate the outlines of a white deer with its body made of peyote and a dark red snake with white spots. However, even this painting owes a debt to the older designs, since the deer whose body is pregnant with peyote is used in weaving (Schaefer 1990:255) and embroidery, as shown in Plate 41, an embroidered dress which was made for me by Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos.

It is clear that many yarn paintings use the design and composition of traditional Huichol arts, such as weaving, embroidery, front-shields, votive bowls, and stone disks. Even though the images and style of depiction, such as the stick-figure *mara'a kame* or the somewhat realistic animal, have been modernized, the underlying composition remains traditional in many paintings. At the same time, it seems that the rules of composition are not rigid in yarn paintings; there is a great deal of variety, and many artists seem to originate designs which they find pleasing and which are based on a variety of geometric shapes, such as the triangle, the circle, and other forms. Moreover, as the paintings become more realistic, as in some paintings of Mariano Valadez and Francisco Bautista and their students, it is likely that the paintings will continue to imitate the conventions of western realistic art, depicting events more "photographically" and less in ways that conform to traditional geometric shapes.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

[1] The paintings are reproduced in Furst and Myerhoff (1966). Two of the three are reproduced in Furst (1968-9) and reprinted in Furst and Nahmad (1972).

[2] According to Lupe's interpretation, the painting represents the journey of a person hoping to become a *mara'a kame*. The curving band represents the person's path, with the spots in the band representing the number of years of pilgrimage the person must make. The flowers on one side represent the temptations that might draw a person off the path, while the spines on the other represent the punishment that awaits a person who strays from the path. The star at the end represents the goal of becoming a *mara'a kame* and developing the ability to see the world of the gods.

[3] These paintings are also illustrated in Berrin (1978:66-67).

[4] Lupe's family continues to sell copies of Lupe and Ramón's designs; in addition, I have seen copies made by other Huichols and sold through the Basilica of Zapopan in Guadalajara and the Nayarit state government shops in Tepic.

[5] The English translations are usually adequate; however, at times they are inaccurate because the translators were unfamiliar with the particular meanings that certain Spanish words have for the Huichols. For example, *tendedera* [misspelled as *tendedro*] is translated as "drying-blanket" (Knox and Maud 1980:11,13); however, to Huichols it means the *itari* (Hui: mat) which a *mara'a kame* lays on the ground in front of him while conducting a ceremony. Offerings are placed on this mat. The context in which this word is used in the paintings make it clear that it is the latter meaning which is intended.

[6] According to Stacy Schaefer (personal communication), hallucinogenic mushrooms do grow in the Sierra.

[7] Bjarne Tokerud, personal communication.

[8] It is possible that these paintings might be based on unpublished paintings by Ramon, since there was clearly a good deal of borrowing and copying of themes occurring in Tepic during the 1970s.

[9] The catalogue does not give a Spanish name for Hakatemi.

[10] According to a note on errata tipped in, the paintings are mislabelled; Negrín (1986 :48) illustrates this painting.

[11] Eger Valadez and Valadez (1992) use the "l" spelling of Huichol words, rather than the "r"; as noted above, these variations reflect differences in dialect.

[12] Maria Von Bolswching, art dealer, personal communication.

[13] Ortiz Monasterio et al. (1992:n.p. [51]) presents a photograph of one of the wooden saints, hung with offerings.

[14] Schaefer (1990:126,143) affirms the importance of the wooden saints, saying that as part of her commitment to learning weaving, she was required to make offerings to a saint, and hang on it samples of her weaving.

[15] The western effort to reproduce scenes realistically can be seen in yarn paintings produced by Western artists such as Francisco Duran Villareal. Plate 40, “Huichol Woman,” by Duran reproduces a photograph.

[16] According to Stacy Schaefer (personal communication), the carved stone disks are also placed over sacred holes in the ground in ranchos, temple compounds, and corn fields.

[17] *Trompe l'oeil* refers to a type of painting which deceives the eye; paintings in which one first seems to see one figure, then another are an example of this type of painting.

CHAPTER 6
MAKING YARN PAINTINGS

MATERIALS AND MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUE

Three materials are used to make a yarn painting: a flat board, yarn, and beeswax to glue the yarn onto the board. A fourth material, relatively rarely seen, is a small, round, commercial mirror set into the yarn painting.

Plate 13 shows artist Eligio Carrillo making a yarn painting on the day that I interviewed him. He sits at a rough board table on the earthen patio in front of his house. In front of him on the table is a plywood board spread with beeswax. To one side is a plastic bag filled with balls of acrylic yarn. The Huichol artist works in the midst of the family, surrounded by domestic activities. Work is not separate from family life. While I sat with Eligio, visitors came and went, women gossiped, young men fixed a truck engine, pigs and chickens wandered through the yard.

The technique Eligio uses is shared with most other Huichol artists; and seems to have changed little, if at all, over time. First the artist covers the board with a thin layer of beeswax, often starting with thumb-sized balls of soft wax. These are laid on the board and spread in strips with the thumb. The whole board is spread at one time. An experienced artist can spread a board quite evenly this way. An inexperienced artist can sometimes be identified by considerable variation in the thickness of the wax. Sometimes artists use a small tool to even out the thickness.

Some artists use a commercial wax sold in Tepic; this wax is yellowish-white, and contains beeswax mixed with a pine resin. While adequate for painting, it is not very durable; and tends to be used more at the lower end of the market. Yarn paintings made with it may deteriorate, as the yarn becomes unglued over time. I own one such painting which was made in 1988, and which is now starting to become unglued; perhaps one factor was that it was kept in a very dry house for several years. A different wax, which is reputed to be more durable and not to dry out, is called *cera de Campeche* (Sp: beeswax from the state of Campeche). This wax is dark orange in colour. A number of the better artists now use it; however, it is more expensive and more difficult to acquire, since it is not sold in Tepic but only in Mexico City.

The white wax must be warmed to a correct temperature in order to glue the yarn; *cera de Campeche* tends to remain sticky and pliable even at cool temperatures. Artists using white wax often warm the board every time they take it out to work on it

(Furst 1968-9: 21-22) by putting the board in the sun. Early morning is best; by midday the sun may be too hot and will melt the wax. If there is already part of a design on the board, the wax may soak through the yarn and ruin the painting. On a cool cloudy day, it may not be possible to work because the wax is not sticky enough.

Next the artist applies yarn to the wax. Most experienced artists begin by laying a border of straight lines around the outside edge of the yarn painting, as Eligio is doing in Plate 13. This process is usually done without drawing on the wax. The border often consists of three contrasting or complementary colours, and can be seen in most paintings from the 1960s onwards. A contrasting border might consist of three contrasting colours such as pink, yellow, and blue, as in Plate 12, "The Spirits come to the Drum during the Ceremony"; a complementary border might consist of shades of colours adjacent to each other on a colour wheel, such as yellow, orange, and red, as in Plate 4, "The Birth of the Sun-god at *Reunar*, a Volcano in *Wirikuta*" by Urra Temai. Three colour borders have become standard practice, although some artists vary this number.

A second type of border uses geometric shapes such as a row of repeating triangles or a fretwork design. This type of border also dates back to the early commercial paintings, such as Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos' 1966 painting, "Peter Furst receiving the Name of a Deity" (Berrin 1978:67); and can also be seen in sacred offerings such as those collected by Zingg and Lumholtz (Berrin 1978:152-3). It is particularly popular among artists such as Francisco Bautista, and other San Andrés artists who have been influenced by his style. Plate 30, "Sun" by Francisco Bautista, and Plate 32, "First Day of the Drum Ceremony" by José Castro, show examples of this type of border.

I have seen an inexperienced artist make a yarn painting by starting with the figures inside, and then adding the border at the end; however, that artist had to modify the border's straight lines to accommodate his figures, which was an interesting procedure but probably a less efficient way of working.

Once the border is complete, the artist draws the main figures. Most of the artists I have seen draw a rough sketch in the wax itself with a sharp object such as a nail. Those who are going to do a circular design may use a metal compass to draw the circle.

Mata Torres (1980:31) observed that most artists lay the yarn directly on the wax, without any preliminary sketch. This idea has been adopted by some Mexicans, who cited it to me as a proof of the visionary nature of the paintings. In a sense, the idea that Huichols paint directly on wax without being able to change their designs resembles the Zen Buddhist concept of ink-brush painting; these paintings are done on thin rice paper with a wet brush. The slightest attempt to change or retouch the painting would tear the paper. The goal of ink-brush painting is to transfer a direct experience of reality to the paper without the intervention of the conscious or questioning mind (Suzuki 1956:279-282). The popular view is that Huichol paintings are done the same way; and that they exemplify the same kind of visionary or unconscious perception.

However, most commercial yarn artists do not seem to work this way; they sketch out their designs first, but the sketches are quite simple. A few lines or a stick figure may indicate the design element. The colours and the details are all filled in freely.

The yarn is laid down by pressing it into the wax, usually with the thumb. While a beginner may work slowly, an experienced artist can press quite quickly; and some can even press two strands at a time. The artists work carefully, pressing firmly, making sure the yarn strands lie tightly against each other, and making many turns in direction of the yarn.

The result of the changing directions is that despite being flat and having a surface only one strand of wool thick, yarn paintings do have texture; achieved primarily by filling in the background with solid colours laid on in a variety of shapes. The background is filled with squares, triangles, and circular shapes which follow the curves of the main design elements and complement them. The artists take care to fill solid blocks of colour with interesting patterns, rather than simply filling the background with straight lines of yarn. The texture creates pleasing patterns, and highlights the main design elements. The texture may also help to preserve the yarn painting. When the yarn is laid down with frequent turns in direction, the wool seldom follows a straight line for long. This technique may help to prevent the yarn from snagging and lifting off the wax. Unfortunately, it is not unusual to see the yarn starting to lift off the wax on yarn paintings which are ten or twenty years old; and it seems particularly likely to happen when the yarn has been laid down in long, straight lines.

No fixative is applied to the surface of the yarn. In contrast, many Huichol artists now paint a glue sizing onto the surface of finished bead pieces, because the beads shake loose quite easily.

Most yarn paintings are sold unframed. Some artists put a rough frame on the back, consisting of thin strips of wood nailed onto the backing. This procedure tends to stabilize the plywood backing and keep it from warping; however, it adds to the weight of the painting, so few artists do it. Often artists take their paintings to market themselves, and may have to carry them on the bus and from store to store to sell them. These artists are not inclined to add to the weight by putting on a frame.

The main change in yarn painting materials over time has been in the yarn itself. According to Lupe, in the 1960s she and Ramón used a comparatively thick yarn sold under the brand name, *Indio*. By the 1970s, the artists had begun to use a thinner yarn sold under the brand name of *El Gato* [1]. Through the 1980s and 1990s, the artists have continued the movement towards thinner yarns, such as the yarns sold as *Cristal*, *Diamante*, and *Estilo*.

The change in yarn thickness has had considerable impact on the designs. When thick yarn was used, only a few figures could be fitted onto a standard size yarn painting, such as 60 cm x 60 cm; and each figure had relatively few colours. A typical painting of this type is Plate 12, Chavelo's "The Spirits come to the Drum during the Ceremony." A small yarn painting of 30 cm x 30 cm might contain only one figure, as Mariano Valadez explains:

Hope: How has your art changed since you began?
Mariano: The paintings I first did were 60 cm x 60 cm. The designs were very simple. It was possible to finish a painting in one day. We also did 30 cm x 30 cm, with designs of a single object like an arrow, a ceremonial feather [Hui: *muwieri*], and with that little bit, the painting was almost finished. We did a lot of 5 cm x 10 cm also....
Hope: Did you do them illustrating just a little peyote?
Mariano: We did small designs, and only two types, such as a corn that had been picked, or a peyote flower, or some flowers that we used in ceremonies, Therefore there wasn't much need to tell the legend or the explanation.

Now that the artists use finer yarns, the amount of detail possible in a yarn painting has increased considerably. A small yarn painting using thin yarns now has as much detail as a yarn painting of four times its surface area which used the thicker yarn. This change has affected the amount of labour required to make a painting; it takes the artists longer to complete a painting because many more strands of yarn are required to cover a given surface area. In the 1960s, a 60 cm x 60 cm painting could be completed in one or two days; now a painting of this size may require four to eight days to complete. The longer production time affects the profitability of making yarn paintings. Even if the artists charge four times the price that they did twenty or thirty years ago, they may not be making much more for their labour because the paintings take four times as long to make.

In fact, unless the artists manage to sell into the upper levels of the market, they may not make much more than the Mexican minimum wage, which was N$30 pesos a day in 1994. For example, Alejandro López told me that the small paintings of 30 cm x 30 cm which he made for me required three days each to make. He charged me N$100 pesos (about $33 U.S.) for each one, so he made roughly the minimum wage. In favour of yarn painting is the fact that the work is done "sitting, in the shade" as one artist told me, rather than working twelve hours a day in the blistering sun as an agricultural labourer. Still, this example demonstrates why yarn painting is not highly profitable for many artists; and why they may be willing to abandon it for other crafts such as beadwork if the return drops much below the minimum wage level.

The yarns which most yarn painters use are commercial acrylic yarns; there is little record of the Huichols using pure wool [2]. Acrylic yarns are relatively inexpensive and readily available in stores in Tepic and Guadalajara; and suffice for most artists. Only the Huichol Center in Santiago expressed concern about the consistent availability of colours and yarns, because it produces goods in volume. According to Mariano Valadez, the Center buys most of its supplies in Mexico City because the yarn colours are discontinued every few years in Tepic.

A relatively recent innovation is the practice of twisting different colour yarns together before putting them on the board. According to Kiva Arts (1992), this procedure was invented by the yarn painter Tucarima (Elena Carrillo in Spanish), who began untwisting 2-ply or 3-ply yarns, then respinning two colours together. Evidently, this process adds to the time required, and thus affects profitability; therefore it seems mainly to be used by painters who can count on a good return for their work. Twisted yarn does not seem to appear in paintings before about the 1980s. This procedure gives a variety of effects; in Plate 27, "The Deer-god

Kauyumari with Guardian Snakes," Santos Daniel used it to make a two-tone cord, encircling and highlighting the snakes. Twisted yarn can also give a rippling effect, which mimics the texture of the ground or an animal's fur; this feature can be seen in many paintings by Mariano Valadez, such as "Goddess of Life." The technique is comparatively rare among other artists, and most painting examples which I collected do not use it.

There has been little change in the backing material over time. Most artists use three-ply plywood, fiberboard, or masonite board. In general, the better artists work almost exclusively on plywood; it is artists selling in the souvenir market who use cheaper or poorer quality backings, such as masonite. According to Furst (1978:29-30), Ramón Medina made a distinction between fiberboard, which he considered a manufactured product not suitable to receive a particularly sacred design, and plywood, which he thought came from trees which had a soul. Furst does not elaborate further on the idea that the backing should have a soul; and I have not heard any other artists express this distinction [3]. Furst also notes that Huichol yarn painters preferred fiberboard because, unlike plywood, it does not warp. Again, I have not heard this myself, nor have I noted that fiberboard is less likely to warp; in fact, it can warp and even disintegrate if it gets wet. Therefore, I suspect that these criteria may have been Ramón Medina's personal opinions, rather than generally accepted standards among Huichol artists.

Most artists cut their boards in standard sizes and shapes. Using standard sizes and shapes makes it easier to cut multiple boards or boards of different sizes out of a sheet of plywood. Artists often cut their boards in sizes based on multiples of 15 or 20 cm. The most common shape is the square in sizes such as 15 cm x 15 cm, 30 cm x 30 cm, 45 cm x 45 cm, 60 cm x 60 cm, or 1.2 m x 1.2 m. Another common shape is the rectangle, such as 60 cm x 1.2 m or 30 cm x 45 cm. Occasionally one sees very large yarn paintings, up to three or five metres long. Most paintings I have seen which are this large are displayed in museums or government offices; the artists may have made them in this size specifically for exhibition or an institutional sale. However, I have also seen a few large paintings in private collections.

Some artists work on circular boards. This is a less economical shape to cut out of a sheet of plywood, as there is more wastage, and it is more difficult to cut. Therefore, this shape tends to be used more at the upper end of the art market. Sometimes artists use circular shapes if a particular buyer requests them, so that they know the painting is presold at a certain price.

The circle, square, and rectangle are the only shapes I have seen sold commercially; the artists do not seem to make commercial paintings in other shapes, such as ovals or irregular shapes. In contrast, the sacred offerings were made in irregular shapes, such as the oval and bottle-shaped forms collected by Lumholtz and Zingg (Berrin 1978:152-3).

Yarn paintings often have the text of a legend or story written in Spanish on the back. Some have text written in Huichol; this practice seems to be more common in paintings of the 1970s. In paintings collected from the 1990s, only a few artists--principally Cresencio Pérez Robles and José Benítez Sánchez--routinely write text in Huichol. Occasionally one also sees paintings with text written in English. This choice often depends on who the buyer or collector is, and whether the artists plan to sell to an English-speaking market. Very rarely, the person who transcribes the text signs his or her own name.

Most Huichol artists I interviewed are able to sign their names. Some can write the text as well, while for others it is difficult or impossible. As discussed in Chapter Two, artists tend to sign paintings according to the buyers' preferences. Some buyers want signed paintings, while others do not.

Paintings are rarely dated. Some show the place of manufacture. It seems mainly to be several artists from San Andrés, as well as José Benítez and his apprentices, who make a point of writing the place and date. Clearly date and place are not considered important to write down, either by artists or vendors. A few artists write that the paintings are made by a Huichol or indigenous artist.

The Huichol's aesthetic criteria can be deduced by looking at one of the most basic aspects of a yarn painting--what constitutes skill in making yarn paintings at a technical level. I will rely on comments made by Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos and her family when assessing a yarn painting by an inexperienced artist.

Lupe's first comment was, "*Los colores quedan bien* (Sp: The colours match well)." She and her family then launched into a critique of the painter's basic skills, such as how the yarn and wax were applied.

Ideally yarn paintings demonstrate basic technical skill. In a well-made yarn painting, the wax is spread smoothly on the board, without lumps or gaps, so that the yarn adheres well. The yarn should be laid on evenly, so that the strands are neat and lie tightly alongside each other. There should be no gaps between the yarn, or yarn lifting off the wax.

If a yarn painting is well-made at this basic level, the Huichols will then go on to assess its other qualities. However, if it is poorly made technically, it will be judged as deficient and not fit to sell, no matter how good its design or colours may be.

These comments also suggest that there is a hierarchy of skills in making yarn paintings. The Huichols' aesthetic judgments may be based on their perception of this feature. The first level is the technical skill of using the materials correctly.

The second level of technical skill appears to be using colours well. In Lupe's words, the colours should "*quedan bien* (Sp: match well)." A yarn painting with poor colour use would be judged deficient. This evaluation was echoed by Chavelo González, who told me that it wasn't hard for someone to learn the physical technique of yarn painting, but that it had taken him years to learn to combine the colours well.

These comments pointed towards what I had already suspected in looking at yarn paintings, that colour played an extremely important role in Huichol aesthetics. In a way, this assessment seems self-evident. Huichols use colour with a bravado matched by few cultures around the world. Usually the first comment westerners make about yarn paintings is how very colourful they are.

COLOUR AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Yarn painting, embroidery, weaving, beadwork, all Huichol arts use vivid colours. The Huichol love of colours is particularly evident in the clothes they wear. A well-dressed Huichol man in fiesta gear wears a rainbow of colours: an embroidered suit and cape, several multi-coloured woven bags slung over his shoulders, several more woven belts around his waist, a belt of little embroidered pockets with bright red tassels around his hips, beadwork bracelets and pendants, and a sombrero encircled with beadwork dangles and covered with multi-coloured feathers; Berrin (1978:10,49,58) illustrates photographs of men in fiesta finery [4].

The yarn paintings celebrate the Huichol love of colour. The artists seem virtually fearless in their use of strong colours in a wide variety of combinations. For example, Plate 3, "The Goddess of the Corn-field," combines hot pink, lime green, orange, lemon yellow, and chocolate brown. Plate 4, "The Birth of the Sun-god at *Reunar*, a Volcano in *Wirikuta*" combines turquoise, hot pink, yellow, orange, red, and black.

Yet somehow, it all works. The paintings do not seem garish or ugly. In artistic terms, the colours are balanced [5]. One way the Huichols achieve this objective is by filling in the background with large masses of colour, particularly in older paintings. Some recent paintings by artists such as José Benítez entirely fill the painting with figures, and have little background colour. The paintings are also unified by the convention of using a border around the outside. The borders usually repeat colours from the painting itself, or use complementary colours.

Huichol interest in colour is certainly linked to their religious practices; and in particular to peyote, the hallucinogenic cactus which is eaten in Huichol ceremonies. Many people who eat peyote report experiencing brilliant colours and vibrating patterns (Cordy-Collins 1989:41-43); Mata Torres (n.d.:104-109; my translation) provides a vivid description of this experience:

> [I see] a marvellous world of colour, in which everything changes into a fountain of forms and colours....The colours are alive and breathing, like the stained glass windows of Gothic cathedrals....The conviction grows that all the colours can combine themselves, that no colour excludes another. All can mix together without appearing ugly. But the way the colour gradually shades is important, even decisive. Greens with violet, magentas with greens, dark blues with greens, yellows with lime green, reds with blues or oranges, which move from the softest to the strongest shades....there are in front of me shapes of rhomboids, squares, stars, triangles...It is a world of architectural shapes which seems more logical than the world we usually see, and more geometric than the world we know.

According to Eger Valadez and Collings (1978:47,51) and Schaefer (1990:127), Huichol artists value these colours and patterns; and attempt to reproduce them in their weaving and embroidery.

Despite the antiquity of peyote use in Huichol culture, the rainbow of colours used by yarn paintings, as well in the other Huichol crafts, appears to be a recent phenomenon. Samples of Huichol clothing collected by Lumholtz and Zingg do include some use of dyed colours, such as orange, gold, yellow, blue, green, and navy blue (Berrin 1978:184-196); however, other samples Lumholtz collected used mainly red and black for clothing embroidery, and natural brown, white, and black wool for weaving (Berrin 1978:184,188,190,193,194); Lumholtz (1902:v. 2, 219) commented that the Huichols obtained red by unravelling blankets sold to them by Mexicans. This limited colour use is confirmed by Captain G.F. Lyon (1828:293-4), a British traveller who visited Bolaños in the 1820s, and who described the clothing of some Huichols he saw selling salt in the market place:

> The dress of the Indians was principally of a coarse blue or brown woollen of their own manufacture, formed into a short tunic, belted at the waist and hanging a little way down before and behind. Many had no other clothing of any kind; but the breeches of the few who wore them, were of ill-dressed deer- or goat-skin....The men wore round the waist or over their shoulder several large woollen bags, woven into neat and very ornamental patterns...[and hats] bound round with a narrow garter-shaped band of prettily woven woollen, of various colours and having long pendant tassels.

One factor in the modern expansion of colour use is the increased commercial availability of a wide range of dyed yarns at a reasonable cost. The invention of aniline dyes and acrylic yarns, which are cheaper than wool, has put a wide range of colours within the Huichols' economic grasp; so too has the increased participation by Huichols in the wage economy, which gives them the cash needed to buy these materials.

The recent predominance of multi-coloured work was confirmed by one of my consultants. According to Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos, the basic colours--red, blue, and black--are the oldest; and were almost all that they worked with when she was young. She remembers that they used only blue and white or black and white for beadwork [6]. For woolen goods, they used the natural colours of sheep wool, such as brown, black, and white. They also used the natural white of a native cotton plant. Thus, the early style of Huichol work was characterized by use of one or two strong or dark colours, contrasted with white or a natural light beige.

Lupe also pointed out that there are regional variations in colour use, which are particularly apparent in how people dress. The older style of dress is preserved by the Huichols from Santa Catarina; the men often wear only one or two colours, usually with strong contrast, such as a solid dark blue shirt and white pants. Many crafts from this area maintain this strong contrast of a dark colour against white;

woven belts are often dark blue or black on white, and a man's cape, shown in Plate 42, is made of dark blue and red embroidery on white fabric with a dark red flannel trim.

In contrast, she said, the "Lupeños"--the Huichols of San Andrés and Guadalupe Ocotán--emphasize colour "combining." They put together a number of different colours, and what is admired is how they combine the colours. This practice is particularly evident in embroidery; Berrin (1978:186,192,196) illustrates samples of clothing from San Andrés. In Lupeño style, one often sees wide bands of geometric or semi-abstract patterns running around the borders of clothes. These are filled in with embroidery, sometimes using shading which runs through a gamut of adjacent colours such as pink to rose to red to orange; and sometimes using strong primary colour contrasts such as bright red, blue, and yellow. In Lupeño style, there is also more emphasis on filling in the patterns, creating solidly worked blocks of embroidery. In Santa Catarina style, the embroidery tends to be more open, with white space showing through and incorporated into the design.

My own observation in the Sierra is that there is now a fair amount of movement and sharing of ideas between the Huichol communities. Thus, this contrast of Lupeño style with Santa Catarina style is not solely a regional one, although it may be regionally emphasized. One also sees multi-coloured work in Santa Catarina, although it may be less common; and one- or two-colour contrasting in communities such as San Andrés. In Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos' own family, which has roots in several parts of the Sierra, both styles are used; and they can identify in which style a piece of work is done.

Lupe's comments indicate that there are several main styles of Huichol workmanship and use of colour, and that the Huichols are quite conscious of these different styles. The high contrast style, with limited colours, may be an older style or more frequently used in the past, simply due to the limited availability of coloured materials.

Clearly the use of colour in yarn painting draws on these traditional concepts of using colour. Yarn paintings which are sacred offerings use a limited range of highly contrasting colours such as bright red, yellow, blue, and white (Negrín 1986:42; Ortiz Monasterio et al. 1992:n.p.[73]); or they use natural wool colours, as illustrated in Plate 1, "Eagle and *Nierika.*" However, yarn paintings done by Ramón Medina and Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos in the 1960s use many colours in a single painting, and demonstrate concern with colour combining; that is, using shades of colours and more complex combinations than just primary colours. In Ramón Medina's work, one can see a transition in colour use over a few years, from the relatively few colours used in his *Datura* series, to the more complex colour use in "Barbara Myerhoff Receiving the Name of a Deity" (Berrin 1978:66). The main limitation in the 1960s seems to have been the thickness of the yarn, which restricted the number of colours which could be used within a single figure or design element.

Since the 1960s, the Huichols have been using progressively finer yarns; and a broader palette of yarn brands and colours. This change of materials has allowed finer detail in yarn paintings, with an increase in the number of colours used, both in a single figure and in a painting as a whole. As more colours are used, the combinations of colours become even more complex and important than they were in the early paintings.

Looking at colour combinations, and the bravado Huichols used in combining them, I began to think there must be some theory, implicit or explicit, guiding how colours were put together. In fact, I wondered if Huichol use of colour--such a striking part of the culture--might have deeper aesthetic or philosophical implications. These intuitions were confirmed as I talked to artists.

My first lead was listening to San Andrés artist Vicente Carrillo talk about a large paper maché deer he was decorating with beads. He said he was using *colores fuertes* (Sp:strong colours) so that the deer would appear *muy fuerte* (Sp: very strong). I asked if he always used strong colours. He replied that he could if he wanted to; but he preferred to use a combination of *fuerte* and *bajito* (Sp: low or soft) colours, because the combination was more subtle than using all *fuerte*.

Because of the implications of the terminology he used, I will continue to use the Spanish words *fuerte* and *bajito* in the following discussion. I asked Vicente to point out which colours of beads were *fuerte* and which were *bajito*. I had heard Huichols use these colour terms before; but thought that they meant colour terms similar to those used by westerners (Itten 1973:17,34-36); that is, *bajito* colours might be colours which westerners define as pastels, which are colours with white mixed in, or greyed or dull colours with black mixed in. I expected *fuerte* colours would be pure hues, or intense colours.

However, when Vicente pointed out the colours, they were not what I expected. Some colours which I would call dull, greyed, or pastel he called *bajito*, but sometimes he called them *fuerte*; colours I would call strong, like a bright orange, he defined as *bajito*. Often two shades of the same colour, which I thought were virtually identical, would be categorized differently. A blue of one shade he would call *bajito*, and a very similar blue (to my eyes) he would call *fuerte*.

I began to think there was a system of categorizing colours underlying his judgments which was different from the western concepts of pure hues and pastels. Subsequently, I began to test this hypothesis with other artists. I found that all immediately understood the terms *fuerte* and *bajito*; and if asked, would immediately categorize any colour in one of the two categories.

Artist Chavelo González explained that *bajito* colours were the colours one finds in nature; so, for example, the blue of the daytime sky, the brown of the earth, and the green of leaves or plants are *bajito* colours. He also defined the natural white of cotton or wool, and black wool as *bajito*. Man-made colours, or colours not found in nature, are *fuerte*.

However, *fuerte* and *bajito* have wider implications beyond simply categories of colour. Vicente Carrillo also talked about the importance of combining colours for subtlety. An artist has a choice. He or she can use all *fuerte* colours, in which case the object will appear extremely strong; or a combination of the two, in which case there will be a subtle change from one to the other. If the artist prefers, he or she can use all *bajito* colours. Not all Huichol colour combinations are intense contrasts, and some artists prefer to work in *bajito* colours. Plate 41 shows an embroidered dress which Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos made for me, using *bajito* colours.

The alternation of *fuerte* and *bajito* describes an artistic strategy of complementary opposition. The alternation between the two poles is important. All *fuerte* or all *bajito* is sometimes less interesting than the movement back and forth between them. As our conversation continued, I began to see that the preference for movement between poles described a great deal more than colour combinations. In fact, *fuerte* and *bajito* were key concepts in Huichol philosophy and aesthetics, and understanding this conceptual structure helped to explain some of my experiences living with the Huichols.

From my first encounters with the Huichols, I noticed profound mood shifts in the tenor of events. Days might go by with very little happening. The women would make tortillas, the dogs would bark, the men would chop wood or work on crafts. Everything would seem even, unexciting, almost too calm. When I first visited the Huichols, I learned Huichol embroidery to occupy myself during these long periods when nothing seemed to be happening and I had no real job to do. Then suddenly, a startling event would happen to shake me out of my complacency. We would suddenly shift into mystical time and supernatural events. A *mara'a kame* would arrive and might begin a healing, waving his shaman's plumes and sucking objects out of a family member; or we would stay up all night for a ceremony, fasting, and singing. Intense emotions would be aired, people would cry and talk; the gods might visit. The ceremony would rise to a crescendo of emotion, then gradually taper off until after dawn when we would finally stagger off to sleep. The next day, I would be left groping for some explanation, or swimming in a state of excitement, while everyone else went about their business as though nothing had ever happened.

At first, I thought that my perception of excessive shifts of emotion was an inevitable part of fieldwork, a result of being in the midst of another culture. Everyone else knows what is going to happen, and what it means. It seems so obvious that they do not think to explain to the person from another culture. Since I alone did not know what to expect, events took me by surprise and seemed particularly intense. However, as time went on, I noticed that these pronounced mood shifts seem to characterize most Huichol ceremonies I have attended. Ceremonies often begin very quietly, with a rather contemplative air. A *mara'a kame* may begin singing, while children run around him and women continue cooking; people fall asleep and wake up again. During the course of the ceremony, more and more attention is paid as the ceremony builds to a crescendo of power and emotion; then moves back again to a state of tranquility and *alegría* (Sp: good humour).

As I listened to the description of *fuerte* and *bajito*, I began to realize that the movement between poles might, in fact, be a central value in Huichol culture. To test this theory, I described to Chavelo González the state of mind I aim for in my life, a state of calmness and equilibrium, sometimes described as one-pointed mind in Buddhist thought. He laughed at the notion; and asked me, "When are we ever the same? Only when we're dead!"

He and another family member, a Huichol school teacher, went on to explain that staying the same, which I thought of as calmness or equilibrium, is not a goal in Huichol culture. In fact, equilibrium is seen as unattainable; rather, the goal is to move back and forth from one extreme to another through a range of emotions, while maintaining one's balance and control. This is what is meant by *fuerte* and *bajito*. It is running a gamut back and forth from powerful and intense to restrained and subdued, rising and falling. Maintaining this rhythm--orchestrating the moods of *fuerte* and *bajito*--is what the *mara'a kate* try to do when they sing and conduct ceremonies; and participants in a ceremony judge the *mara'a kate* on how well they orchestrate the movement.

This concept of *fuerte* and *bajito* may be similar to a concept termed shamanic equilibrium. Furst (1974:59-60) and Myerhoff, interviewed by DeMille:(1980:336), have described an incident in which Ramón Medina tried to explain to them what he meant by balance. He took them to the top of a waterfall and proceeded to leap from rock to slippery rock, close to a steep drop into the barranca below. Furst describes this event as a concrete demonstration in shamanic equilibrium, the balance required during the dangerous journey over the chasm between the worlds, when a moment's hesitation or misstep may mean death.

While the concepts of *fuerte* and *bajito* seem to contain elements of the idea of shamanic equilibrium, I question whether they are the same. Balance and equilibrium alone seem to be the idea of stillness that Chavelo González scorned; dynamic equilibrium, a state of balance in motion, might describe the Huichol aesthetic value better.

Myerhoff (1974:74-75) touches on this concept when she says that, in Huichol religion, the "notion of sacred...seems to embrace above all the concept of attaining wholeness and harmony....a dynamic condition of balance." She goes on to illustrate this idea of dynamic balance with a reference to dynamic tension between strong and weak woods used to make the *uweni* (Hui: an armchair used by the *mara'a kate*). Her discussion suggests that the ideas of *fuerte* and *bajito* may pervade other Huichol manufactures as well.

A second concept may also play a part in explaining the idea of complementary oppositions. This is the concept of rising and falling, or going up and coming down. So far, I have used the terms *fuerte* and *bajito*, and given *bajito* the translation of low or soft. However, *bajito* derives from the Spanish word, *bajar*, meaning "to come down" as though descending a ladder or staircase. I noticed that frequently the artists used a second word, *subedito*, either in place of or as a synonym for *fuerte*. Subedito derives from the Spanish word, *subir*, meaning "to go up." The combination of *subedito* and *bajito* suggests rising and falling.

When I questioned Chavelo González about the meaning of *fuerte/subedito* and *bajito*, it became clear that this pair of words related to a second basic concept in Huichol religion, the idea of going up and coming down. When a person begins the pilgrimages to become a *mara'a kame*, the process is considered to be climbing a staircase. Each year of pilgrimage represents one step of the stairs. In Lupe's family, the first six years of pilgrimages are considered to be climbing the staircase; and a person may end his or her commitment at this point. However, the family constantly stresses that to learn well, and to be fully capable as a *mara'a kame*, a person should complete a second six years, so that they may come down the staircase and finish well.

Other authors have suggested the importance of the idea of going up and coming down in Huichol thought as well. Lumholtz (1902:v. 2, 204) writes that, "Life is a constant object of prayer with the Huichols; it is, in their conception, hanging somewhere above them, and must be reached out for." Grimes (1964:29) suggests that to the Huichol time is thought of like climbing a hill, always going upwards. This distinction is marked within the grammar itself. He writes:

> Progress through time is treated linguistically in much the same way as progress up a hill. The future is "higher" than the speaker, the past "lower"....The later of two events is...'uphill from' the earlier, the earlier,...'downhill from' the later.

Future linguistic research may reveal that the *fuerte/subedito* and *bajito* distinction is deeply embedded within the Huichol language as well.

One Huichol ceremonial object collected by Lumholtz (1900:62) reflects the idea of going up and coming down. It is a miniature carved stone staircase; Lumholtz was told it represented travel, especially the travels of the gods, and that each step represented one stage of the journey. I would suggest that it may also represent the stages of learning to become a *mara'a kame*. A similar idea may be expressed in Plate 8, "The Temple of the Deer-god," attributed to Heucame; the five steps of different colours leading up to the temple may represent the five years (and six pilgrimages) required to become a *mara'a kame*.

The staircase is a well-known theme in Mesoamerican thought, and has wide implications. Furst and Furst (1980:8) maintain that there were pan-Mesoamerican concepts which formed the foundation of indigenous aesthetic systems. Among these concepts were the idea that the universe is multi-leveled; and that the stepped pyramid, like a staircase, serves as the cosmic model of the sacred world. I have heard similar ideas expressed by Huichols.

Thus the Huichol describe colours as rising and descending, or as strong and soft; and use colours to express these oppositions. Their use of colours may express deep-rooted traditional aesthetic concepts, even though expressed in modern forms and materials.

Up to this point, I have been describing general patterns in colour use or aesthetic principles which underly Huichol use of colour. These principles guide the choice of colours and the overall effects which the artists try to achieve. However, there is also another aspect of colour which has significance in understanding yarn paintings; the meaning ascribed to individual colours, and to combinations of colours.

It is not uncommon to find little pamphlets on Huichol colour symbolism distributed by galleries which sell yarn paintings; according to the dealers, they provide this information because western buyers often ask what the colours and the symbols mean. These pamphlets seem to be compiled from interviews with passing Huichols, and by reading the anthropological texts such as Lumholtz's (1900) work on symbolism. While the information contained in these pamphlets generally appears correct, it is very simplified and limited. For example, the pamphlets equate red with fire, yellow with the sun, and so on. While this equation is generally true, it tends to oversimplify Huichol symbology, since typically symbols have multiple meanings, which relate to and extend each other. For example, red is equated with fire, but also with blood; and since blood carries the life force, with life itself.

Lumholtz (1900) remains the best compendium and analysis of Huichol use of colours in art. He describes in minute detail a wide range of ceremonial objects, the colours used to make them, and the meanings attributed to them by their makers. Nevertheless, Zingg (1938:243-4) cautions that, contrary to the impression given by Lumholtz, there is no clear correspondence between colours and deities or directions, except a general association of blue and green with the rain goddesses [7]. Zingg's words of warning seem well-justified, when one reviews the colours and associated meanings described by Lumholtz (1900) in his index. While he notes that there are certain general meanings for colours, such as an association of red with life, the rising sun, and fire, or of yellow with the setting sun, fire, and grandfather fire, other data he collected on the meaning of colours show that, in many cases, these associations do not apply strictly; for example, all of the following can represent rain: red and yellow lines; red and blue lines; white and yellow lines; white and blue lines; green, red, and blue lines (Lumholtz 1900:221-222). In other words, most colours, including red and yellow, can also be used to depict rain.

The same limitations seem to apply to yarn paintings. In many cases, the colours are personal choices or preferences of the painters, and are not necessarily symbolic in themselves. It would be an over-simplification to suggest that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the colours used in yarn paintings and their meanings, or that an analysis of the paintings can always be done based simply on the colours; frequently, the artists have pragmatic selection criteria for colours, as the following comments by artists indicate.

Availability of particular colours is one important criterion. The artists may simply use whatever colours of yarn they happen to have on hand, or which they were able to find in the shops. Mariano Valadez reflected on the difficulty he had maintaining a supply of the colours he prefers to use.

Hope: And do you buy your wools in Mexico, or in the United States?
Mariano: In Mexico, in the city of Mexico.
Hope: You can't buy them here in Tepic?
Mariano: No, because the material, every two or three years, is discontinued. They don't have it.

I watched one artist ask a person who was going to Mexico City to buy him a selection of colours of the *Diamante* brand; he was not particular about which colours, and said he would take any colours the buyer liked.

The selection of colours within particular yarn brands is limited; and this restricted palette may also affect the artist's choice of colours, as Santos Daniel explained in our interview. We discussed the change in colours over time. He said that when the brand of yarn the artists used changed from *El Gato* to *Cristal*, they had to start using much duller colours. *El Gato*, which they used before, had brighter colours. Now he usually works in *Cristal*, but it has few *fuerte* colours, mainly just red and green. The main reason he changed was that a dealer told him that they were having trouble selling paintings made in the thicker yarn; and asked, why not change yarns? Now Santos uses four brands of yarn to get the colour range he wants, including *Diamante*, *Cristal*, and *Estilo*. Which one he uses depends on the design he is doing. Now he finds *El Gato* a bit *fuerte*, and it looks a bit spongy. *Cristal* is more threadlike and harder. In general, he prefers to work in *Diamante* because it is a bit thicker. *Estilo* is very thin. He likes to work with three types together. That way he gets lots of colours. *Diamante* and *Estilo* brands each have relatively few colours, and so the others complement them. He can get all the brands in Tepic, but at times they are scarce. The stores run out suddenly.

As this interview makes clear, the artists may be obliged to make up a full palette of the colours they prefer by using different brands of yarns; and they are constrained by the colours which are manufactured and sold in each brand.

Artist Modesto Rivera echoed these concerns; and told me that he preferred *Diamante* because it has more natural or *bajito* colours, and that his own preference is to work in *bajito*. Modesto uses mainly *Diamante*. He likes the colours because they are very *claro* (Sp: clear), and more natural. The other brands have *brillante* (Sp: shiny) colours, and they are not very natural. Still he likes to use a range of colours, including *fuerte*, *bajito*, and *subedito*. *Diamante* is the best for colours. He doesn't like *Estilo* much, because the colours aren't pure. They are mixed colours; he shows me an example of *Estilo* which uses two threads of different colours twisted together.

Personal taste is an important factor in the artists' choices of colour. The artists are not in any way bound or obliged to use a certain colour to express their meanings, although the small pamphlets imply that they are. Chavelo González explains that an artist can change the colours in a yarn painting without changing the meaning of the painting; the artist can use whatever colours he or she likes.

Saleability is also a factor in the artists' choice of colours. I noticed that the artist José Benítez produced a large quantity of paintings, all made in bright oranges and bright blues. According to the dealers, these colours sold particularly well. A Huichol artist commented that these were almost exclusively *fuerte* colours. Benítez' repeated use of the same colours suggest that he has discovered a colour combination which sells well to western buyers.

As the foregoing discussion makes clear, before drawing any conclusions about colour and meaning, it is important to determine that the artists are not simply choosing to use certain colours because the yarns are available in the stores, more saleable, or simply their own personal preference. Having pointed out these cautions on over-simplifying, I would now say that colour and meaning are associated to some extent.

One of the most intriguing conversations I had was with the artist Eligio Carrillo, who declared that he would like to paint with pure colour some day, without using any designs at all--just colour. He did not seem to know that, in western society, painting with pure colour is called abstract art.

Hope: How do you decide which colours to use?
Eligio: Well, this also comes with the learning, you have to know how to put the colours [together] with each other, because the colours speak also.... With colours, it [the meaning of the yarn painting] can be understood. There is this also. You have to know with which colour I am going to speak, with which colour I will be understood, with which colour it is possible to speak. Also, with colours and nothing else, even if it doesn't have this [a design], with colours it can still be understood.
Hope: The colours speak to the gods?
Eligio: Yes, with that too. With pure colour also.

He went on to say that certain colours have meanings which can be understood by the gods, or by a person who already has the abilities of a *mara'a kame*. Such a person can look at the colours in a yarn painting and determine what it means, regardless of whether it has a design.

Eligio: So I like colours. Without designs. With pure colours, like this. And I know what I am making. What I am going to make. What is in it, right? But I have never made one like this, with pure colours, even though I have it in my mind. To make a yarn painting with nothing but with pure colours you can do it.
Hope: Have you made a yarn painting like this for yourself? Or if it is not to sell, have you made a yarn painting with just colours?
Eligio: Yes, if it's not to sell, it is possible.

Eligio was concerned that if a painting did not have a design, no one might want to buy it. Therefore, he might only make such a painting for his personal use.

He explained how a yarn painting could convey meaning through its colours, using the painting illustrated in Plate 14, "The *Mara'a kame* talks to the Deer-god at Night," a round painting of a deer spirit communicating with the *mara'a kame* in a nighttime ceremony. (Appendix Six describes this painting in detail.) He explained that this painting is mainly done in *bajito* colours: it has a black background all around the outside rim, with little spirit figures around the circumference. In the centre is a huge head of a deer, with a comparatively small *mara'a kame* beside it. Below is a bowl filled with fire and the smoke of copal incense. All the central figures are made in gold tones, with white light all around them, against a background of a light burgundy red. Eligio explained how the colours in the painting reflected the meaning:

Eligio: this [painting] is for the shaman, who translates [messages from the gods] better in the night. That is, this is at night, outside, and they [the shamans] light it up. With the power he has, it's almost as though it was dawn, even though at that moment it is night. And here [in the centre of the painting] this could be by night, and it is as light as though it was day. That is what the colour means in this one. And here it is by night that they are doing the ceremony, he presents himself to the deer which is the power. At the same time, [it seems as though] it is midday, but it is really part of the night.
Hope: And he is doing the ceremony?
Eligio: Yes, That is how we see it, as though it was in daylight. That is to say, he is translating it [the *mara'a kame* is translating for the gods during the ceremony].

In contrast Eligio showed me a second yarn painting of the sun in daytime, illustrated in Plate 16, "The Sun-God as He Appears at Midday." This painting uses *fuerte* colours, such as a bright turquoise blue with hot pinks and reds. The design represents the sky, and the sun at its zenith transforming into a person; and therefore the power of the sun to light up the sky at daytime, just as the shaman did at night. The *fuerte* colours emphasize the theme of power.

Because of the deeper levels of meaning which could be expressed by the combinations of colours which the artist uses, Eligio emphasized that it was important for the artists to understand the significance of colours, and to know what they were trying to express.

Eligio: [The] artist should understand the knowledge, what I am going to make, what colour I am going to put on, more or less, and know and understand what I am going to make. What can it indicate? How can I explain it? That is what there is [ie., the powers contained in the colours].

The conversation with Eligio demonstrates that colour and meaning are associated; however, the associations may be more complex than a simple one-to-one correspondence between a single colour and a single concept, such as red equals fire. Meaning may lie in the particular combinations of colours in the painting as a whole, as demonstrated by Eligio's explanation of the meanings of his paintings. It is also apparent that the combinations of colours may be more important than each colour is individually, and that the combinations express complex concepts about ceremonies or spiritual properties which are not immediately apparent simply by looking at the painting. As Eligio noted, a *mara'a kame* may understand the meaning simply by looking at the painting; the rest of us need to ask for the explanation.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

[1] One version of this yarn used in yarn painting is the all-purpose yarn called *El Gato "Para Todo."*

[2] I have not seen any artists using pure wool yarn. The only reference to this practice I have noted is a 1986 statement by John Bowles that the yarn painter José Benítez used wool (San Diego Museum of Man n.d.:catalogue notes, 1986-35-2).

[3] There is little published about Huichol beliefs that plants have souls specifically, although there is a considerable amount on the powers of hallucinogenic plants such as peyote or *Kieri;* and on transformative abilities of plants, such as the transformation from peyote to corn to deer (Myerhoff 1968). Lupe has told me that trees have spirits, which become stronger as the tree ages. Stacy Schaefer (personal communication) points out that trees also stand for alter egos of the person; and that the umbilical cord is buried with a tree planted on top.

[4] The Coras, the Huichols' near neighbours, take a jaundiced view of Huichol men's sartorial display. They told Thomas Hinton (1981:3), "The Huichol is like a *guacamayo*, a parrot with brilliant plumage who makes a loud squawk and attracts the attention of all...It is a simple matter for a hunter to spot a *guacamayo*, kill him, and take his pretty feathers."

[5] C.J. Fleury, artist, personal communication.

[6] For an example of the old style of earrings, collected by Zingg in the 1930s but still worn by some people today, see Berrin (1978:203). The multi-coloured style is illustrated in Berrin (1978:204)

[7] Further research is needed on the question of the association of colour with meaning. For example, Stacy Schaefer (personal communication) notes that her consultants associate certain colours with directions.

CHAPTER 7
MARKET INFLUENCES ON YARN PAINTINGS

One concern in the aesthetic analysis of yarn paintings is how much they are influenced by western buyers. This cross-cultural influence can go both ways: western buyers may influence what the painters make, and the Huichols may try to modify what they do to communicate certain ideas to their buyers. Accordingly, I included several questions which inquired into these relationships.

The market for yarn painters is represented by several types of dealers and agencies. Some paintings are sold in galleries in Mexico, and some are purchased by wholesale dealers who resell in other countries. These galleries and dealers usually purchase directly from the artists; thus they can potentially play an important role in affecting what the artists make, by their choice of what they buy. However, when I observed interactions between the artists and dealers, most dealers did not seem to tell the artists what to make; rather, the artists made what they wanted, and brought their paintings to the dealers for sale. The dealers purchased the paintings according to their own criteria of how saleable they were, but usually did not explain much to the artists about the reasons for their choices. Thus they were exerting little influence on what the artists made.

One dealer, a Mexican, did seem to be more active in asking for particular themes and materials. Several artists told me that they had begun using certain materials, or painting certain themes at the request of this dealer. Several of the most unusual or innovative paintings had been made at his request, including Santos Daniel's "*Nierika* Symbols which Huichols Paint on their Faces in Ceremonies" (Plate 25), and the eclipse theme of Modesto Rivera's "Black Rain *Nierika*" (Plate 19); thus, this dealer was exerting more influence on the artists' aesthetic choices.

Most artists I spoke to had at least a general idea of what types of paintings sold well, who the buyers are, and where they might get the best prices. A few artists had a fairly clear understanding that there was an international art market; however, most artists do not really seem to understand the art market well, even though they may have toured to other countries.

One sign of the artists' unfamiliarity with market concepts was a lack of understanding of the difference between wholesale and retail price, and how the capitalist economy works. For example, one family had travelled a good deal in the

United States, and became accustomed to receiving North American retail prices for their work. Since the wholesale dealers in Mexico seem to pay, at best, about a quarter to a third of the North American retail price--a fairly standard markup in the arts and craft industry [1]--this family's expectations had become grossly inflated. When they were unable to find anyone in Mexico who would pay them the prices they had become accustomed to, they felt cheated and unwilling to sell their work. It is not uncommon to hear similar complaints from Huichol artists, who feel put upon because the dealers mark up their paintings rather than paying the full retail price to the artists.

For a time, Indians could sell crafts directly to the tourists on the street in Puerto Vallarta, and some Huichols were starting this practice. However, the police have now discouraged such direct sales; they were causing problems for the galleries since the Huichols were charging tourists the same wholesale price they charged the galleries; so the galleries could not mark up the merchandise without tourists complaining. It should be noted that while these incidents illustrate a lack of understanding of why there is a difference between wholesale and retail price, they may also simply be evidence of the artists' efforts to get the best price for their paintings, even if they compete with the dealers by selling directly to the public, and undercutting the dealers' prices.

Huichol artists are business people who must make a living for themselves and their families. They live in a country in which stark poverty and harsh working conditions are the norm for most of their compatriots. Thus, the yarn painters are only exercising common sense when they try to learn how to satisfy their market.

One way they satisfy buyers is by painting designs or subjects which are popular among their customers. Fabiano González Ríos described to me the designs which sold best for him. He said the most popular subjects were the pilgrimage to *Wirikuta;* the fiestas such as the Bull Ceremony, the Drum Ceremony, and the Ceremony of the Toasted Corn; and paintings of the woman giving birth, which sold especially well in shops in Tepic; the latter refers to the mythological theme first introduced by Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos and described above.

The yarn painters tried to accommodate demands for both the older types of yarn painting which use thick yarn, and the more recent types which use thin yarn. Eligio Carrillo noted that these preferences affected the types of designs he made, and whether the designs were simple or more complicated.

Eligio: Some of my friends want the paintings complicated. Because the paintings are for sale, after all [ie., he makes the paintings so they will please buyers]. Some want them with lots of designs. Others don't; they want the paintings to have just one design, but a big one.

Eligio adjusted his paintings accordingly. Using one basic concept, he could elaborate the design and include more detail, or remove parts of the design and just retain the essentials. He illustrated this point, using Plate 14, "The *Mara'a kame* talks to the Deer-god at Night" showing how he could eliminate the ring of figures around the outside, and enlarge the central figures:

Eligio: For example this one, [pointing to painting of deer head] I can make it larger, the head and this part [the part in the centre]. That is to say the most important part. For example, I can put nothing more than this and this and this [indicates putting in central elements and leaving out others]. I can take this out. This expands more. Then there are fewer designs, and it looks better.

A large but simple design appeals to certain types of buyers. Others want a design with more complexity, so they can learn more about the details of the Huichol beliefs which are illustrated in the painting. Accordingly he tries to meet both needs with different types of paintings.

Eligio: When I do it with a lot of designs, [they say] "I don't understand it. what does it mean?" For that reason, many times I do it [simply, like this.] When other people ask me, "Make me just one large design. Just with the necessary parts, the most important" that's how I do it. But so that it is a little bit more spread out like this, and so it looks good also. Not very complicated. [On the other hand] many people want it complicated. Because they want to understand [the meaning of the painting]. I don't know how they know this [ie. that the painting has meaning].
Hope: Do they want many designs because they want to ask and learn, what does this mean? what does that mean?
Eligio: Yes.

I asked what his own aesthetic criteria were; that is, which type he preferred, the paintings which were more simple or more complicated. Although he liked both types, he preferred paintings that illustrated more, rather than less, of the powers of the gods.

Hope: And you yourself, what do you like?
Eligio: Well, to me both kinds look good. Well, for example, I say to you...I am taking away this, then this gets larger. [indicates removing ring of peyote spirits, the ring of green faces around the outside]. It is the same. Well, the only thing is that I am going to take away this, this power that I told you about, or the power that it contains. That the tiny gods, then, these ones are representing, when that shaman is translating. That's [how we see] where they carry the gods, which are words, or which gather together in this place, right. And even if we take away this, in every way it is the same.
Hope: Then a person sees more of where the powers come from, when there are more designs?
Eligio: Yes, exactly.

The artists also try to respond to the desires of their buyers in the colours they use; or at least, to use buyer tastes as one of the criteria they consider. Santos Daniel echoed Eligio's comments in a discussion about how he chooses to use simple or complex colour combinations. Santos felt that the choice was up to the client: some like colour combinations that are very simple, in the old style of making yarn paintings; and some buyers like colour combinations which are very complex.

The modification of colours to suit the market is becoming a vexed question; in particular, it concerns the role of the Huichol Center in Santiago Ixcuintla. This Center provides valuable health and social services to Huichols working in the tobacco fields; its worthwhile activity is partly funded by the sale of Huichol merchandise. A number of artists have worked in the Center making these crafts; some young artists have received much of their training there.

The Center has modified the colours the artists use in order to sell more merchandise in the North American market. Left on their own, it is not uncommon for the Huichol artists to use bright, *fuerte* colours, and to mix many colours in making beadwork jewelry. However, the colours they choose are not necessarily those which sell well in other countries; for example, according to some dealers, many North Americans intensely dislike orange and yellow jewelry, but it is popular among Huichols. In general, the Huichol artists define the colours North Americans prefer in beadwork jewelry as *bajito* colours; therefore these are the colours the Centre uses. In addition, the Center has determined which colour combinations sell well and makes identical pieces in volume, rather than allowing the artists to make whatever they feel inspired to make.

The Center faces a dilemma and so do the artists who work there. At the moment, artists tend to compromise. They work in the Center's colours when working there, and revert to Huichol colour combinations when selling independently. This compromise serves, although there is a certain amount of complaining among the artists. The situation may become more problematic among the young artists who are receiving all their training at the Center. If the only training these artists receive is in North American colour preferences, then it may threaten the sophisticated *fuerte/bajito* colour system which underlies Huichol colour aesthetics. It will be important for all parties concerned to make sure that this does not happen.

I am not sure that this problem affects the yarn paintings produced at the Center as much as it does the beadwork jewelry. North Americans (and especially women, who are the main buyers) seem to be most fussy about the colours they wear. While it was common for dealers to tell me that they could not sell certain colours of jewelry, I never heard a dealer say certain colours of yarn painting were unsaleable, although some dealers did say that some buyers purchase yarn paintings that match the decoration scheme in their homes. Moreover, the Centre mainly sells paintings by Mariano Valadez, who has his own style of colour use; there seems to be little mass-production of yarn paintings, and therefore there is probably less influence exerted on yarn painting than on jewelry and beadwork.

One interesting question was how the artists thought yarn paintings might change in the future. I hoped that this question might elicit what the artists' own ambitions for the future were; and therefore, what their aesthetic goals were. However, the artists answered very specifically, interpreting it as a question of what the market might demand of them.

Most yarn painters had lived through considerable change in the styles of doing paintings. They had seen the transition from thicker yarn to thinner yarns; thus, they noted the change in materials as one of the major changes affecting yarn paintings. When asked how yarn paintings might change in the future, they thought there was a good likelihood the materials might change again. However, they stressed that though materials and techniques of manufacture might change, the concepts underlying the paintings would not. The concepts remained stable because the paintings continue to be based in design ideas that are central to Huichol culture, as Fabiano González explains:

Fabiano: And in the future, what are they going to want? They're going to want it [the yarn] even thinner, but I've never seen any thinner, they aren't going to be able to get it.
Hope: They'll want just thread, like embroidery thread?
Fabiano: I don't see it [ie., there is no yarn like that available].
Hope: What do you think? How are the yarn paintings going to change in the future? Do you think they are going to change more?
Fabiano: I think so. They are going to change more.
Hope: Have you any idea how they are going to change, in what direction?
Fabiano: I think, in style. Well, the designs aren't going to change, I think the designs are going to be the same, but the yarn will change. The yarn always changes.
Hope: The materials?
Fabiano: This, the designs, isn't going to change, because how can we change the customs, the beliefs? I can't change them; I can't put other styles, other designs. If I put other designs, I won't know the story behind them, the significance, right? If I make it like this, from what I know, what I understand, my beliefs (*Sp: creencia*), the things which I am making will go on being made.

Fabiano's emphasis that the designs cannot change reveals an underlying aesthetic theme in the yarn paintings. The yarn paintings should reflect the beliefs and practices of the Huichols, such as the correct activities in ceremonies, the appropriate offerings for a pilgrimage, or the story details of a myth or legend. The artist cannot and should not change these aspects. While the materials were open to change, the stories were not.

To Fabiano, it is important that the artist understand the stories and the significance of the paintings, and that he be able to explain them. If the paintings were somehow changed in design, they would no longer be about what he knew.

Mariano Valadez echoed Fabiano's insistence that the stories and the beliefs should not change. If change in design occurs, it is because the artist has learned something new, or understood a new aspect of the tradition; the tradition itself does not change.

Hope: And you haven't changed your methods, going from the thick yarn to the thin?
Mariano: No it is the same. Or rather, it changes only because the yarn gets thinner. But you don't really notice because only the material is changing. The methods are the same because, whether it is the work or the imagination, those are the same. But at times, when a style is changed, or some picture, it is because at times, a person has another explanation-- it changes--but it is still the Huichol religion. That doesn't change.

Vicente Carrillo saw the need for a less time-consuming, more easily-manufactured product than either yarn paintings or beads. This change would be more profitable for the artists. He thought that change would come soon, but he was not sure how or in what direction. He said: beadwork will be more well-known than yarn painting. He speculated that in the future, the artists might not work with yarn or beads at all. Perhaps they will do painting [ie., easel painting] or something more simple. Now the marketplaces such as Puerto Vallarta are full of Huichol art, but buyers are limited; only foreigners buy it.

Vicente's suggestions reflect an awareness of the relatively time-consuming Huichol work, its low profitability for the artists, the dependence on foreign buyers, and the possibility of market saturation. His idea that the Huichols might turn to painting is interesting; Brody (1976) documents a similar transition from indigenous art-forms to easel paintings in the American Southwestern Indian arts.

It is noteworthy in these responses that the artists are not talking about how they might innovate spontaneously or change their work. They seemed to be quite content to follow the status quo; rather, they talked about how demands for certain materials or buyer interests might change, and they would have to follow it. In fact, the comments of Fabiano and Mariano indicate an inherent conservatism in yarn paintings; as long as the painters were trying to reflect Huichol beliefs and customs faithfully, the designs were unlikely to change radically.

Thus, the modifications which the yarn painters make to suit the market include changes of detail and complexity, changes in colour and yarns, and selection of subject matter. In making these changes, the yarn painters seem to be guided by direct preferences expressed by the buyers. On a deeper level, however, the question of why westerners buy their art and what they want from it, the artists profess some mystification.

Most yarn paintings have some sort of explanation written on them. On the surface, the written text appears to be an attempt to communicate the meaning of the paintings to the buyers. However, the texts are so problematic that one wonders for whose benefit they are written. Does this use of explanatory text reflect a Huichol aesthetic value or desire to communicate to buyers; or is it a response to demand from the western buyers?

There is considerable evidence that western buyers want an explanation when they purchase ethnic arts, and that a religious meaning is most attractive to them. Parezo (1983:183-4) discovered that vendors of Navaho sand paintings quickly learned that tourists were more likely to buy the paintings if they had some sort of legend written on the back. Chatwin (1987:257-261) describes the complex negotiations of a dealer in Australian aboriginal art who insists she cannot sell a painting without a mythological story attached, while the aboriginal artist and his ritual "policeman" try to refrain from leaking any really sacred knowledge.

Increasing saleability may be why the Huichol paintings have text; but one wonders. First of all, the text is usually written in Spanish; and therefore, unlikely to help much in selling the painting to non-Spanish-speaking tourists. Second, the text often ranges from difficult-to-read to impossible. Typically it is written in phonetic Mexican-Spanish with many idiosyncratic spellings such as changing the letter "b" for "v," and omitting unvoiced h's so that *hacia* is written as *asea*; some words are Mexican dialect, rather than standard Spanish or even Latin-American usage [2]. The text is often written in run-on sentences without punctuation, so they are difficult to understand. Some of the text is written in Huichol, which would be readable only by other Huichols; and some paintings have text which is almost completely illegible. Pens skip, the ink is too faint, the ink from thick markers runs together, and there is seldom an effort to correct the illegibility.

It is quite possible that the Huichols do not realize how difficult their texts are to read and understand. Many Huichol artists are illiterate, and dictate their texts. They have no idea whether or not the writer is doing a good job of writing them down. Some Huichols who can write their own texts are still only semi-literate; and do not spell well, write well, or follow the rules of grammar and composition, such as using punctuation. They also may be unaware of how difficult their writing is to read.

A further barrier to understanding is the fact that many of the yarn paintings assume a knowledge of Huichol religion, culture, and mythology that most buyers are unlikely to have. For example, the painting in Plate 4, "The Birth of the Sun-god at *Reunar*, a Volcano in *Wirikuta*" refers to an actual mountain in the desert north of San Luis Potosí; and a long Huichol myth, as well as the important religious pilgrimage to *Wirikuta*; without this background knowledge, a buyer is unlikely to understand the references.

I tried to determine how important it was to the artists to convey the text, and for whose benefit they communicate. I asked the artists a series of questions about what they would like westerners to learn from their art, and what messages they wanted to convey about Huichol culture. I also asked the artists whether they were trying to communicate any particular lessons about Huichol culture to the buyers, and why they thought westerners bought their art. As described above, these questions were difficult for the artists to answer. They seemed not to have thought very much about either; and had difficulty speculating about either their own thoughts about buyers, or about what the buyers might be thinking. Most did not understand the question about what they might be trying to teach westerners, and it was clear that they certainly had no particular program of ideas they were trying to communicate to western buyers. They, and I, did much better on questions which were more specific and concrete, such as what kind of designs sold best, or what materials buyers asked for

Language is one barrier, as Vicente Carrillo explained in our interview. When I asked him why he thought westerners buy yarn paintings, he replied that he doesn't understand why people buy them. He simply offers his art to North Americans, and they help him financially by buying it. It is good for the Huichols that they do. He is grateful. He would be interested to find out what they think. He has never asked.

Hope: Why not?
Vicente: Because they speak English.
Hope: No one has come who speaks Spanish?

Vicente: No one has explained to me.

Mariano Valadez is married to an American, and has lived in the United States. More than some other artists, he understood my question about what westerners might want in Huichol art, and how the artists could meet the buyers' desires. However, even Mariano did not waste much time speculating about why Huichol culture was of interest to westerners. He echoed the gratitude expressed by other artists that Westerners buy their art. It helped the Huichols financially, and allowed them to continue practicing their culture.

Mariano: On one hand, I would like to thank the people who come to buy [art] because they are supporting the Huichol Center, by giving it financial resources to buy medicine, food, so that this Huichol Center keeps going. And I think that it is they who are helping the people, all those who buy art in the Center.

On the other hand also, we have things that they [the buyers] can see here, whereas in the mountains it is very difficult to see them. So they can see them here, and also...it isn't good for the [western] people to travel there, because there are no stores, there are no services in the mountains.

Mariano felt that what westerners could learn about Huichol religion and culture was limited; while the yarn paintings could give some idea of what the religion was, people could only come to understand the religion of the Huichol by living it. Few westerners wanted to or were able to make this commitment; thus the art served as a window on the Huichol beliefs, but not as any deeper form of teaching.

Hope: And what do you think the Huichol religion can teach to the people of the north, do you have any ideas about that?
Mariano: What can it teach them?
Hope: The Huichols, to the North Americans.
Mariano: Well, only through the art, what the religion is about, but portrayed in pictures, or in masks or bowls ... only through these types of offerings ... but in reality, a person cannot understand the life of the Huichols. They can only know it from outside, as though they were observing a custom, but I think the Huichols cannot teach anything else, about how they live, because the person would have to

travel, and see how they live, all the explanation, but that life is very difficult, the life of the Indians. But in the culture, through the work the [Huichols] are teaching everything, so much that in the designs of the yarn paintings, they say a great deal, that is all that they can offer.

Chavelo González expressed most succintly, and probably most accurately, why westerners might buy yarn paintings; he thought it was because they like the stories.

Hope: Why do you think the North Americans like the Huichols' yarn paintings?
Chavelo: I look at it this way. The North Americans like the designs, not just that a yarn painting is very pretty. Some North Americans, even if a yarn painting is badly made, they may buy it. But because of its meaning, its story, the story is what gives it value; because you might see a yarn painting that has very pretty colours, pretty designs, well combined. But if it doesn't have meaning, well maybe someone may buy it or not. But what is important is the meaning, the story, the design. That is what is important. Some North Americans see that, there are some who like the story of a design, they may buy it. That's what the difference is.
Hope: That they are buying it because it is part of the sacred life?
Chavelo: Yes, some may buy it just because it is pretty, a decoration (Sp: *adorno*), and there are others who buy yarn paintings because they like the story, the meaning.

Responding to this interest in meaning, some artists professed an openness to teaching other people about their culture. Fabiano González said that he enjoyed explaining the Huichol traditions to westerners through his art: he liked to explain the Huichol beliefs, the fiestas and the ceremonies. He likes the fact that people from other countries learn about the Huichol beliefs. If anyone asks, he is pleased to tell them. I then asked if some Huichols did not like to teach about the customs. He agrees that there are some such people, but says that he is not one. Nothing ever happened to him as a result.

Fabiano's reference to possible harm which might befall him because of teaching westerners about the Huichol beliefs is significant; by this, he refers to punishment from the deities, who may send sickness or death to him or his family. There are a number of Huichols who fear this divine sanction [3], and it is a factor which I had to deal with in collecting information for this study. There seems to be no clear line about what kinds of religious information can be discussed publicly and what should be kept hidden. As a result, almost every conversation seems to me to be a testing of this limit.

Even among Huichols themselves, there is a reluctance to speak openly about occult matters, as Eligio Carrillo explains:

Hope: Why do you think there are some people who want to keep the religion hidden, and others who are willing to talk about this?
Eligio: Well, they are closed people. Old time Huichols like we were once. And they don't even want to teach their own family. Those people don't want to teach their wife, nor their brother, no one, nor their children. They just receive for themselves and they want to be here learning it. No more. When that person dies, then no one knows. That's how many are. But many others are not. Among we Huichols, that's how it is. Many others, no, they talk to everyone. They are friends of everyone. The person who is no more than himself alone, that person is not a friend. That person doesn't have friends, not with anyone.
Hope: Thinking only of himself?
Eligio: He himself. No more. And it is as though he had a mirror in front of his face. Every face like this. He doesn't see other people. He is covered by his own mirror, turned towards himself. He doesn't talk to you, he is doing nothing more than looking at himself talking to himself. That's how it is.
Hope: I am looking at the person talking with his mirror in front?
Eligio: Talking to his own mirror.
Hope: And he doesn't see the people, he only sees his own face.
Eligio: That's how it is.
Hope: And to you, it is better to speak to everyone, to teach, so that all this will survive?
Eligio: Yes, I have talked to many people. Many people know me. And I talk to them this way. Many people like it. They gather around, they meet together, listening. They like it. They say, "Well, many people don't like to talk about this, and you do." And yes, I do. Maybe because the others don't know, for that reason they don't want to talk. But I know some things, and I speak about it. But no one taught me, neither my father, nor my mother, nor my grandfather, no one. No one. No one. I learned all by

myself.

Hope: From the gods?

Eligio: From the Fire-god. He, yes, he has concentrated me.

This discussion with Eligio reflects the difficulty which even Huichols themselves are experiencing in relation to the question of openness; and while Eligio opts for openness, even he was cautious about answering some of the questions I put to him.

The restriction on teaching occult information to westerners comes into conflict with a countervailing principle surrounding the yarn paintings, which is that the artist should be willing to explain what the painting means to those who ask. Chavelo González explains:

Hope: You know many North Americans, who come here, and who want to learn something, and often they don't know what they want to learn, and they are looking for something. Have you tried to teach them anything through your yarn paintings?

Chavelo: Yes, when they ask questions, a person should tell them what it is. What this means. What is the meaning of that. I can tell them, But also, the person should try to ask.

Hope: If the person doesn't ask?

Chavelo: If they don't ask...if a person makes a guess, if they try to say what it means, it's possible they will offend, or not know what the other person had in their mind. It is better to ask.

Hope: To know better the stories of the Huichols?

Chavelo: Yes.

The comments by the artists indicate that there is an interaction between what western buyers want, and what Huichol artists can provide. In general, western buyers want paintings that deal with Huichol customs and religious subjects; the artists have responded by making paintings which they believe accurately portray their traditions. The artists may not know too much more about what the buyers want from them; but it is probably sufficient to know, as Chavelo said, that buyers like the stories. The artists try to fill this need by writing the explanations of their paintings on the back. This practice corresponds to an indigenous value that an artist should try to give the explanation to anyone who asks; moreover, it may be offensive to guess at the meaning of a painting. Only the original artist can say what his or her intention was; therefore, that artist should give the explanation.

SUMMARY

The process by which yarn paintings evolved demonstrates that they are a "created" art, formed through an iterative process, a kind of dialogue between the artists and the buyers. The history shows that it was not simply a case of western buyers seeing a traditional art and deciding to buy it. Sometimes the non-Huichols suggest ideas for paintings, which the artists pick up and use; most of the time, it is the artists who propose concepts to the market through their works. The paintings which are sold today are the outcome of this process.

Yarn paintings seem most affected by western buyer preferences in several areas. The technical area is one important aspect; there has been a trend in demand for the artists to use thinner yarns, so that the paintings become more detailed. If the artists do not make this switch on their own, the buyers may request it of them. The demand for neat tight workmanship also seems to be generally a buyer preference, although there are some exceptions, such as one dealer who told me he liked things that "looked like they were made by a machete," and who would not buy paintings that looked too neat. The Huichols have generally adopted the buyer preference for neat, tight workmanship; and consider it a basic standard of technical skill for commercial work, although it is not important for religious offerings.

In general, the Huichols and the buyers have concurred in one important area: that the subject matter of the paintings should remain religious. The western art market has a preference for ethnic art which can be linked to religious concepts, and the Huichols want to produce religious art anyway. The artists clearly expressed a preference for making paintings which teach about their culture; and depict the myths, the ceremonies, and the customs of the Huichol. Apart from a brief foray in the late 1960s, when the yarn painters began using designs such as Walt Disney characters or Che Guevara, all yarn paintings have focussed on religious themes. However, this exception does indicate that the Huichol might produce non-religious designs if the market demanded it of them.

My observation of dealers interacting with artists was that most dealers do not try to influence the subject matter of the paintings. They tend to buy or not buy whatever the artists bring them, rather than tell them what to paint. However, some dealers do influence the art, by suggesting particular themes such as the eclipse, or introducing new design concepts such as the Mondrian-like abstract *nierika*.

In other ways, the Huichols seem to have been somewhat insulated from the effects of the market because they do not seem to have either much interest in, or knowledge of, the desires of the western consumers of their art. Language is the principal barrier, since many purchasers and tourists speak little Spanish. Since the artists do not talk to the consumers very much, they have not been particularly tempted to change their art to accommodate them. The most common assumption which the artists expressed about the consumers was that they like the stories. Since this interpretation is probably reasonably accurate, at least for some buyers (those who can understand the stories), their belief leaves the artists free to paint what they want to paint.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

[1] A markup of 100-200% over the wholesale price is standard in the gift industry (Margaret MacLean, personal communication). Art galleries often work on commission, and may take 40-60% of the retail price as commission.

[2] I found that many words in yarn painting texts cannot be found in Spanish dictionaries, even ones that emphasize Latin-American usage (Castillo and Bond:1987).

[3] Myerhoff (1968:8) notes that Ramon Medina was not afraid of supernatural sanctions because he had received permission from the Fire-god to reveal Huichol sacred stories to her.

Chapter 8

THE "DEIFIED HEART": SHAMANIC VISION AS THE LINK BETWEEN THE ARTIST AND THE GODS

Now I will turn to one of the most intriguing apects of Huichol aesthetics: the role which shamanic vision and inspiration from the gods may play in art. In Chapter One, I highlighted the continuing controversy over whether yarn paintings are simply commercial works, produced in quantity for the market; or whether they have visionary content, and thus significance for a deeper understanding of Huichol religion and shamanism. Here I will look at these questions more closely, including what the artists had to say about the visionary nature of their art; the extent to which shamanic vision played a part in their own art; and how they perceived the link between the artist and the gods.

Because of the evident importance of the idea of shamanic vision, I asked the artists whether they themselves were inspired by visions. The answers to this question were mixed. I found that some artists have experienced dreams or visions which they put in their yarn paintings, but others have not.

Not all artists experience dreams and visions themselves; or if they do, they do not remember them. Even though they themselves are Huichol, these artists expressed doubt about whether dreams and visions can actually serve as a source of artistic inspiration. At least for themselves, they found it did not. Mariano Valadez explains:

Hope: Have you seen things when you are eating peyote? Things that you put in your yarn paintings. Or do you not put these things in your yarn paintings?
Mariano: No, because, the thing is, when you are eating peyote, it is as though time is passing. When the effect ends, I don't keep in my mind what I see, or what I imagine. I don't do that. Nor can I eat peyote in order to do my work.
Hope: You don't remember afterwards what you have seen?
Mariano: No, I don't remember. Because I cannot lie in my explanations, and say that I can take something in order to be able to paint better. No, because I cannot... And regarding the peyote, I don't do it. Many of my colleagues say that they use peyote to do their work, but I don't believe it. I can't lie. I want to speak honestly.

Modesto Rivera believes that while peyote gives the artist life-force or energy which he or she can then use to make paintings, peyote is not in itself a source of the images. I asked him whether he had seen visions. He told me that when a person takes peyote, he or she has the energy that comes from peyote. This energy stays with the artists, and gives them energy to invent images. He thinks that the things of the Huichol religion are not things a person can actually see. For example, one does not see things in the sacred water, but one has a mental idea or image of what they represent; and it is this idea which the artist presents in the painting. Sometimes he depicts the energy of some sacred places or of the sacred gods. For him, the source of images comes from his childhood. His father always did the ceremonies and fiestas, and so he knows what the Huichol traditions are.

In my interviews, I found that many artists used what may be a second-person version of dreams and visions as a source of inspiration. During ceremonies, the *mara'a kate* may tell in their songs about what they may be envisioning at that moment; often the *mara'a kate* tell stories from the Huichol body of myths. The artists listen to what the *mara'a kate* say; then use their imaginations to paint what they hear. Mariano Valadez explained how he applies this idea.

Hope: When you make your yarn paintings, do you paint things you have seen in ceremony, or from your imagination?
Mariano: I make yarn paintings in my own style, according to my imagination. But also, many times, the shamans give me ideas, because whenever they talk about the religion of the Huichols, I am thinking how it is, with my imagination. When I hear the myths or the songs, or the prayers, or the stories, at the time I record in my memory, and afterwards I have it. That's how I am.

He emphasized his respect for the sacredness of the tradition, and for the work that the *mara'a kate* do to understand and teach it. It was this fidelity to the tradition which he attempted to portray.

Mariano: For me, the shamans, and the Huichol religion, ...for me, it deserves a great deal of respect because of the work that is done, and the myths of the shamans, all the offerings, are things belonging to the gods of the Huichols, all of them, they are pure, pure religion, that is being recorded.

A third source of yarn painting imagery is the artists' own imagination or thoughts. Some artists used the Spanish words *memoria* or *mental* for this source of inspiration. *Memoria* is what we might commonly think of as intellectual or "thinking" processes as a source of inspiration, rather than subconscious or unconscious processes such as dreams or visions. However, *memoria* is also linked to the heart, as I will explain in the next section.

The artist who was most explicit about using visions in his yarn paintings was Eligio Carrillo. But even he qualified this source; and said that dreams were probably more important than visions, such as peyote visions.

Hope: And do you get your designs from visions?
Eligo: Oh yes, that yes. From visions. Sometimes, from dreams. Which represent a lot through dreams.
Hope: And is there a difference between the designs that you get from dreams and designs that you get from your imagination?
Eligio: Yes, there is that also, from my imagination. There is also that. That is to say, it comes from many places. I have learned that it is thus, things which I learn well, many things result.

When I asked him if it was possible for a person looking at his paintings to tell the difference, his answer was that a person who was already a *mara'a kame* or visionary would know without being told. Otherwise it was up to the artist or *mara'a kame* to explain it. Without an explanation, an observer could not really understand.

Hope: And do the two types look different... If I am looking at a yarn painting, can I know if it is from a vision or if it is a dream or something else?
Eligo: Yes.
Hope: How can I know this?
Eligo: Well, for me it is easy. But perhaps that person, there, who doesn't know anything [ie., does not have shamanic ability], for him it is very difficult. That's how it is. Because I ...when I see it...I have to say it, because I have the knowledge, right. [ie., a shaman should explain what he sees. I should say to the person] "Good then, that is an image, which is the representation of where they made the beginning of the

ceremony" Perhaps I should say it. But if he doesn't say anything to me, I will only look at it to see what it contains, right. And that too. If another person makes it, I just [look at] what he made, right. Just look at it. I understand. That's what that means.

As Eligio explains, it is the learner's obligation to ask what the painting means, or what sort of vision it may contain. Once asked, it is the artist's obligation to explain; for example, he may explain that this painting represents a vision of what occurred at the beginning of a ceremony. If the learner does not ask, the artist will not explain but will only look at the painting himself, knowing its meaning. Similarly, if Eligio sees a painting by another artist, he can understand its meaning without asking.

Among artists who did say that they had occasionally experienced dreams or visions, the evidence was equally mixed. Some artists could describe a vision that they had experienced, but said that they had never tried to depict it in a yarn painting. Others had experienced one or more visions, which they did put in a yarn painting; but they said that most of the paintings they made were not of this vision, but rather of culturally-derived themes such as myths. One artist told me that his painting was his own vision; but from other things he said to me, I suspect that the painting was based on a vision of someone else in his family who probably is a *mara'a kame*.

Thus, clearly the evidence regarding the use of vision in yarn paintings is quite variable. Some artists are limited to their own imaginations or intellectual processes; others are using dreams and visions of the supernatural plane as the source of inspiration. Moreover, some artists are using their own personal dreams and visions, while others use the dreams and visions of *mara'a kate* as described to them.

This process is made even more complicated because not all paintings made by a visionary artist are actual personally-experienced visions. An artist such as Ramón Medina may produce some paintings which express actual visions, but make other paintings which are based on culturally-derived themes such as myths. I found it was not uncommon to have painters point out to me which paintings were their own visions, and which were not; this ability to distinguish showed that they used both types of inspiration in their work.

Thus, the evidence which I gathered tends to support the guarded references cited from the early literature in Chapter One. While some painters and paintings are visionary, others are not. However, these non-visionary artists may still find inspiration in the reported dreams and visions of the singing *mara'a kate*. Many yarn paintings are purely conventional or traditional, such as a depiction of a myth or ceremony with its associated offerings. These paintings do not necessarily draw on visions for their subject matter.

The artist's comments shed new light on some theories that the chemical stimulation of peyote and its chemical component, mescaline, are responsible for the designs made by Huichols. This theory was popular in the 1970s, when there was considerable interest in the effects of hallucinogenic plants generally. Particularly in Berrin (1978), there are repeated references in articles and captions to peyote visions as a source of imagery in yarn paintings and in the designs of weaving and embroidery. Some authors have taken this idea to mean that most or all Huichol art originates in chemical stimulation. Cordy-Collins (1986:43) states that:

> The origin of Huichol art is to be found in such [peyote-induced] hallucinations; it is the direct product of the chemical alteration of the brain's synapsing system. The sensory overload which is thus brought about is "translated" by the brain into colors, shapes, and sounds...there are two stages of mescaline hallucinations: the former is one of intensively color-saturated geometric forms. In the latter stage such abstractions are replaced by familiar, identifiable objects, people, and places...This two-part sequence is clearly reflected in Huichol art: the cross-stitched embroidery and the woven textile patterns...replicate the early stage of geometric images, while the beaded gourds, the yarn paintings...and other more "realistic" creations more ably evoke the sorts of images experienced in the later stage hallucinations.

The statements of the artists I interviewed indicate that peyote itself is not a principal source of designs for yarn painting; as I have shown above, most yarn paintings use culturally-derived designs such as myths and ceremonies. Probably more accurate is Schaefer's (1990:245) cautious statement that only a few of the artists who are most mature in a religious career are able to use vision as a source of design.

The subject of dreams and visions is more complex than the early yes/no debate indicates. As I asked these questions of the artists, I began to think that the question itself, as formulated by Western researchers, was somewhat misdirected. The question of whether the images in yarn paintings portrayed dreams and visions missed the point of what the artists were telling me. Rather than the content of a specific dream or vision and how it was portrayed, what was equally important was the process of envisioning, or how vision and artistic inspiration occur. This process is less variable, being inherent in the artist himself or herself. It is closely related to concepts which westerners might call body, mind, and soul.

I began to think that soul concepts might play a part in Huichol art after reading *The Human Body and Ideology* by the Aztec scholar Alfredo López Austin (1988). This superb book examines ancient Aztec concepts of the body. In particular, the author looks at animistic centres in the body--that is, centres which contain particular force, and which may be related to seats of the soul. Finally, he relates the Aztecs' internal model of the human body to their concepts of the exterior world, the spiritual world, and the cosmos.

Since the Huichol language is related to Aztec, I hypothesized that the Huichols might share similar conceptual categories. This similarity was confirmed when it became apparent that two of the three main Aztec animistic centres--the top of the head, called *cua* in Aztec, and the heart called *yol*--seemed very close to Huichol concepts called *kupuri* and *iyari*. These linkages are explored more fully elsewhere (MacLean 1992a). Here I will refer mainly to some of my conclusions, and show what some basic Huichol soul concepts might be. Then I will show how the artists' own comments extend these ideas and link them to artistic production.

López Austin (1988:181-184) states that "the words souls, spirits, animas all lack precision." To refine these terms, he tries to locate them at points which he calls "animistic centres" in the body; these are the point of origin of the impulses for life, movement, psychic functions; they may or may not correspond to a particular organ. He draws an important distinction between animistic centres of the physical body, and animistic entities which might be called souls or spirits and which may live on after death.

López Austin identifies several Aztec words for animistic centres in the body which seem related to the Huichol words, and in particular, two which I will refer to here. The first is the heart, called *yol*, a term which resembles the Huichol word *iyari* (which is often pronounced with the "l" as *iyarli*) [1]. The second term is *a* (crown of the head) and *cua* (upper part of the head) which resembles the Huichol word, *kupuri*. However, the functions of *kupuri* seem more closely related to the Aztec word *tonal*, which refers to irradiation contained in the body.

According to López Austin (1988:190-194), the heart was most important to the Aztecs. It is mentioned most frequently, and "it includes the attributes of vitality, knowledge, inclination, and feeling. References to memory, habit, affection, will, direction of action, and emotion belong exclusively to this organ." The heart does not include perception, which is governed by the *ix*, which means face or eye; this latter term and its functions seem to relate to the Huichol word *nierika* which also refers to seeing. *Cua*, the top of the head, is the seat of the mind. It is the intellectual process, the seat of memory and knowledge. In summary, López Austin (1988:199) proposes the following model:

> Consciousness and reason were located in the upper part of the head (*cuaitl*); all kinds of animistic processes were in the heart (*yollotl*); and in the liver (*elli*) the feelings and passions...a gradation that goes from the rational (above) to the passionate (below), with considerable emphasis on the centre...where the most valuable functions of human life were located. The most elevated thoughts and the passions most related to the conservation of the human life were carried out in the heart, and not in the liver or head.

In Aztec belief, the heart played a central role in artistic production. It was thought to receive some divine force, although López Austin found no reference to the deities which gave the ability to children, or the moment they did so. The person who was outstanding for brilliance in divination, art, and imagination received divine fire in the heart, whereas a person who was a bad artist lacked it (López Austin 1988:231-2).

Anderson (1990:152-3) reinforces López Austin's finding of the link between the heart and the making of art; as he phrases it, the Aztec model of aesthetics was based on a "deified heart," in which "true art comes from the gods, and is manifest in the artist's mystical revelation of sacred truth." The spiritual blessings of art come only to the enlightened few who have learned to converse with their hearts. Anderson regrets that the Aztec aesthetic tradition may not have survived the conquest; however, it may be that certain aspects of this tradition do live on among the Huichol. I make this assertion with caution, since the Huichol do not seem to share some of the more fearsome and pessimistic aspects of Aztec aesthetics proposed by Anderson (1990:140-156), such as the belief that nothing matters except art, or that life is ephemeral and meaningless. My perception is that the Huichols have a more cheerful outlook on life.

Comparing the Aztec ideas of animistic centres to Huichol concepts of the soul brings out some clear links. Furst (1967) provides the most comprehensive discussion of Huichol soul concepts as they relate to the body, based on interviews with Ramón Medina. While both Zingg (1938:161-173) and Lumholtz (1902:v. 2, 242-3) deal with soul concepts, they write mainly about the soul after death, rather than in relation to the body and its attributes. Here I will review the Huichol soul concepts as described by Ramón. I will also suggest that, perhaps due to a misunderstanding of the significance of the Huichol word *iyari*, the role of the top of the head, which Furst called the fontanelle, was overemphasized at the expense of the heart.

Ramón located the soul, or more accurately, the essential life-force or life-essence, in the top of the head or fontanelle. He called both the soul and the fontanelle *kupuri* in Huichol and *alma* in Spanish. Occasionally, he also used the term *kupuri-iyari* which Furst translated as "heart and soul." *Iyari* was also used in terms such as "he has a Huichol heart" or a "good heart." Grimes, a Huichol linguist, explained *kupuri* as "fuzz or short fuzzy hairs, as on the underside of a deer's tail or on the head of a newborn infant." He considered its use for the fontanelle a poetic euphemism consistent with Huichol verbal imagery (Furst 1967:41). A Mother-goddess, *Tatei Niwetukame*, places *kupuri* in a baby's head just before birth. It is placed in the soft spot where the bones have not yet closed; this is its life or soul. *Kupuri* is attached to the head by a fine thread, like spider's silk (Furst 1967:52).

Myerhoff (1974:154) adds a few more details about *kupuri*, also based on information from Ramón:

> A great many plants and animals and all people have this *kupuri* or soul-essence; it is ordinarily visible only to the *mara'akame*. Ramón has depicted it in his yarn paintings as multicoloured wavy lines connecting a person's head or the top of an object with a deity. Verbally he described *kupuri* as rays or fuzzy hairs.

When Ramón shot peyote with an arrow as part of the peyote hunt ceremony, he said that rays of colour spurted upward like a rainbow; these rays are the *kupuri* or life-blood of the peyote and the deer.

Kupuri is needed to maintain life. When a person loses *kupuri* due to a blow, he or she feels ill and cannot think properly. The *mara'a kame* is called. Because the person is still alive, the *mara'a kame* knows "that the *kupuri* has not yet become permanently separated from its owner, that is, the metaphorical life between them has not yet been severed by a sorcerer or by an animal" (Furst 1967:53). The *mara'a kame* must hunt for the soul; Furst was not clear whether the *mara'a kame* goes physically on the hunt, or projects his or her own thoughts or life force. The *mara'a kame* finds the soul by its whimpering; seeing the soul in the form of a tiny insect, he or she catches it with the shaman's feathers, wraps it in a ball of cotton, and puts it in a hollow reed. The *mara'a kame* brings the soul back and places it in the head. The cotton disappears into the head along with the soul. Then the person comes back to life (Furst 1967:53-56).

Furst does not talk in any detail about *iyari*; he does not seem to have seen it as something different than *kupuri*. He notes only that during the funeral ceremony held five days after death, the soul is called back and captured in the form of a luminous insect called *xaipi'iyari* (Hui: *xaipi* meaning "fly" and *iyari* meaning "heart" or "essence"). When the soul takes the form of rock crystals which incarnate the spirit of respected ancestors, the word *iyari* is also used; it is known as *tewari* (Hui: grandfather), *uquiyari* (Hui: guardian, protector, or chief), or *ürü'iyari* from *ürü* (Hui: arrow heart) (Furst 1967:80).

The usual translation given for the Huichol word *iyari* is heart (Furst 1967:41), heart-memory (Schaefer 1990:412), or heart-soul-memory (Fikes 1985:339). I have also heard the Huichols translate *iyari* into Spanish as *corazón* (Sp: heart) or *pensamiento* (Sp: mind, personality), a Spanish word that they use broadly to refer to a person's character; for example, a person of *buen pensamiento* (Sp: good character, good intentions). Peyote is the *iyari* of the deer and also of the gods (Fikes 1985:187; Schaefer 1990:342).

Furst's (1967) article appears to combine the functions of *kupuri* and *iyari*; for example, he describes *kupuri* as the soul which leaves the body, both during life and at death. He apparently thinks it is *kupuri* which returns to the family one last time during the funeral ceremony. Furst combines the two types of entity, while López Austin separates them. However, the Huichol have two separate words, which seem to correspond to the Aztec words in other ways.

It is possible that Ramón himself did not make a clear distinction, since Furst later says that he corrected himself on other points; or Furst did not understand the difference between the two words and their related concepts; for example, in describing the soul which comes back after burial as a luminous fly or as a rock crystal, it appears that Ramón actually used the word *iyari*, not *kupuri*. He called them *xaipi iyari* (Hui: fly-heart) and *ürü iyari* (Hui: arrow heart). Furst (1967:80) noticed the change of name and commented on it, but did not perceive *iyari* as a different entity. Therefore, Furst's article describes the soul as seated in the top of the head; and Furst gives the head greater importance, in contrast to the Aztec emphasis on the heart.

There is little further discussion of *iyari* in the literature. The fullest account is in Schaefer (1990:244-246), whose weaving teacher explained that one's *iyari* grows throughout life like a plant. When a person is young, he or she has a small heart; when he or she grows, it becomes much larger. However, the *iyari* must be nourished to grow; eating peyote and following the religious path to completion allow one to develop this consciousness. At the highest level of mastery, the *iyari* is the source of designs used in weaving:

> the designs she creates are a direct manifestation from deep within, from her heart, her thoughts, and her entire being....those inspired to weave *iyari* designs learn to view nature and the world about them in a different perspective, as living designs. When they tune into this mode of seeing their world, they tap into a wealth of design sources and consciously bring their imagination into visual form (Schaefer 1990:245).

Weaving from the *iyari* is so difficult that many women never attempt it, preferring to copy designs all their life. Nonetheless, achieving this goal is the peak of Huichol artistic expression; and women who achieve it receive elevated status and are recognized for their designs (Schaefer 1990:248).

On the basis of the importance of the *iyari* in weaving, it seemed to me that *iyari* might have considerable significance for the production of yarn paintings as well. Moreover, the general aesthetic significance which the heart had for the Aztecs suggested that its role in Huichol thought might have been neglected. Therefore, I asked the yarn painters what they understood *iyari* and *kupuri* to mean; and what role they thought these entities played in their art.

Young artists tended to give one sentence answers to these questions, such as "*iyari* means life." Eligio Carrillo gave the fullest expression of the meaning of *iyari* and *kupuri*, and their significance in art. Because his answers were so complete and form a connected whole, I quote him at length; what he said was consistent with the answers of other artists. Eligio's answers are not always easy to understand without a background in Huichol studies; therefore, I paraphrase his responses, to elaborate on and clarify his meaning.

According to Eligio, *iyari* contains a number of ideas. *Iyari* is a form of power which comes from the gods. It is the breath of life, sent from the gods; and the person's own life and breath.

Hope: About the word *iyari*, what does this word mean?
Eligio: *Iyari*, That means the breath, the breath of the gods ... That god sends the power, to continue living. To think. And it is what guides you. That is *iyari*. What makes you able to think. In every place you go, with that you walk around. It is what protects you. The *iyari*. It is the thought [Sp: *pensamiento*] which gives you ideas and everything.

The *iyari* includes the heart, but is more than the physical organ. I interpret what Eligio says here to mean that while *iyari* is seated in the heart, it has many functions; and pervades the person's life.

Eligio: It is the heart, of the body. But it is the whole body, not just the heart, the *iyari*. It is as though it were a magical air. Magical air. That *iyari*. The *iyari* tries to translate from many directions.
Hope: If a person is understanding things from many directions by means of the *iyari*?
Eligio: Yes that power, that is *iyari*

"Translating from many directions" is a Huichol expression in Spanish, which means that a person with shamanic abilities is receiving messages from the gods. I clarified this point in my next question.

Hope: And when a person is receiving messages from the gods, it is by means of the *iyari*?

Eligio: Yes, exactly, But [only] if it [the *iyari*] is already in tune with them. You make it in tune when you are studying [ie., learning to become a *mara'a kame*], and you are in tune by means of this. An electricity.

Here he means that a person "tunes" the heart to the gods through the pilgrimages and other actions required to become a *mara'a kame*. Once in tune, it is as though there was an electrical current passing between the person and the gods, carrying messages.

Even though a person develops the *iyari* so that it can receive messages from the gods, the capacities of the *iyari* alone are not enough to make yarn paintings. A person must have both *iyari* and mind, for which Eligio uses the Spanish word, *mentál*. Here is how Eligio distinguishes the two capacities. He talks about the mind and about the knowledge of shamanism, by which he means the knowledge perceived through the heart. Both are required to paint.

Eligio: Shamanism is one thing, and mental power is something else. Because, even if I know something about shamanism I need to have mental power to do my work. Mental is different, it is to translate and make things. And you need both powers, right, to do the work.
Hope: Shamanism is in order to see?
Eligio: Yes, it is to see.
Hope: And mental power is to translate and make the yarn painting?
Eligio: That's it.
Hope: You need the two, then?
Eligio: That shaman has to have the two powers to be able to make things, and if he doesn't have both, even if he is a good shaman, what will he gain? He won't be able to do anything. That's how it is.

He distinguishes between painters who have developed both capacities and those who have not. Some painters use only the mind; Eligio is careful to say that they too can paint well, since they too are focussing just as a person focusses through shamanic study.

Hope: And are there some people who do yarn paintings who are not shamans, and others who do them who are shamans?

Eligio: Well, those who do yarn paintings who are not shamans, they only base themselves in mental powers. Or it is mental power that they have opened. They just take note of something, and more or less have an idea, and they make it. But still, more or less, I don't think they are very deficient, they do well with their minds. They are also concentrating. They do that.

To clarify the difference between mind and *iyari* further, I groped for an analogy; and hit upon the perhaps awkward idea of a car and driver. The mind is like the steering wheel, but the *iyari* is like the motor; without a motor, the car goes nowhere; but without a steering wheel, the strongest motor spins its wheels.

Hope: And in the yarn paintings, how do you use the *iyari*?
Eligio: The mind, that is what I carry. This, it has arrived, in order to be able to [ie., the mind gives the capacity to do].
Hope: Then it is that which you were saying to me, the person works with the mind and at the same time with *iyari*?
Eligio: Exactly.
Hope: To receive the...
Eligio: In order to receive it, you have to do that.
Hope: And the mind is like the guide...as though I were driving a car, I hold the wheel?
Eligio: Exactly. That's how the mind is.
Hope: And *iyari* is like the motor of the car?
Eligio: It's the most important. It's what you need. That is *iyari*. In Spanish, they say heart; in Huichol, we say *iyari*. It is the power, that is the breath of the whole body
I then asked him what was the link between *iyari* and becoming a shaman. He clarified that through the training and pilgrimages required to become a *mara'a kame*, the person is opening the heart so that it will be able to receive messages from the gods.
Hope: And if a person is becoming a shaman, do they strengthen the *iyari*, or do they open it?
Eligio: They open it. Now they begin to understand. After, it [the idea] comes out and then ready [to make art].
Hope: The ideas, the messages, come out?

Eligio: You think of them, then they come out.

A *mara'a kame* is a person with the heart open. During the training, another *mara'a kame* can help a person to open the heart, if the *mara'a kame* has been given the power to do so by the gods.

Eligio: Oh yes, there is among shamans, if that one is not...if his *iyari* is covered, many healers know how to open it.
Hope: Does the shaman have his heart more open?
Eligio: Yes, because the shaman has it open, well, and those who don't know, well it is closed. For those who know... . For example, [pointing to a child] this one doesn't know, and if I were a shaman, very good, I could open his mind (Sp: *mente*) so that he would learn faster. That's how it is, but with the power from the deer, with the power from the gods. It is because they have given me power, that I can do this. And that's how they do this. The *iyari*.

I then shifted to the idea of *kupuri* and asked what its role was in relation to *iyari*.

Hope: And *kupuri*, I don't understand what is the difference between *kupuri* and *iyari*?
Eligio: Little difference. *Kupuri* means the same [as I have been saying] And *kupuri* means a thing very blessed, which is the *iyari*. It can be blessed with the *iyari* of the gods, bless your body, it has been blessed. That is the word it means.

In Eligio's explanation, *kupuri* has the meaning of energy, while *iyari* or life is the product of the energy. The energy of *kupuri* blesses, or irradiates, the person's entire body including the *iyari*. The gods have *iyari* and so do people; *kupuri* is the energy that is transmitted between them.

Hope: And *kupuri* is like the electricity that comes?
Eligio: That comes to you from the gods who are blessing that person.
Hope: And they send from their *iyari* the electricity which is the *kupuri*?
Eligio: Yes.

Hope: And it arrives at my *iyari*?
Eligio: Yes.
Hope: Now I understand it....
Eligio: *Iyari* is breath. *Kupuri* is the life, is the life of the gods, that the gods may give you life, they give you power, that's what that is.
Hope: Is it like force?
Eligio: Force, yes, force. More force from the gods is *kupuri*.

Kupuri can be transmitted from gods to humans, with the help of the *mara'a kame*. In this way the person's life and energy are increased. Eligio uses the analogy of the *iyari* as a glass of water, which may be filled up to the top with *kupuri*. If some water is lacking, the *mara'a kame* can give more.

Eligio: It [*kupuri*] is a power. Here among ourselves, that's how we use it. Among shamans, they give it - *kupuri* - and it is a power, a bit more. For example, to say, well, suppose this glass of water is a life, yes, an *iyari*. It's lacking a little bit, or here like this. Good, I am going to give you a little bit more, I have to fill it up, it is one day more, a little bit more, then this glass will have this.
Hope: And are there people who lack *kupuri*?
Eligio: Yes, a lack of...
Hope: Force?
Eligio: Of force of the gods. That's *kupuri*.
Hope: And those people are very weak?
Eligio: Exactly, yes.

I then tried to find out whether the colours used in yarn painting have any relation to *kupuri*; that is, whether different colours might signify different types of energy.

Hope: Do the colours mean anything in relation to *kupuri* also?
Eligio: Yes, this is where this comes from, this the power, it is where the power comes from. For this reason, this indicates the power.
Hope: Then the colours signify different types of *kupuri*?
Eligio: Yes, of the gods. That's what it is.

I was not sure from this answer if each colour signified a different type of energy, or simply the colours signify *kupuri* generally. Unfortunately, I did not pursue this idea as much as I could have. We continued on with the idea of how *kupuri* appears to the shaman or how it is seen.

Eligio: But that is the power, they are magic powers. No one can see them, only the shaman is watching what he is doing. That's how it is.

I then inquired where *kupuri* is located in the body. Eligio insisted that while *kupuri* enters through the head, it spreads throughout the body. While it is carried in blood, it is carried in other parts of the body as well.

Hope: Does a person have *kupuri* in their own blood?
Eligio: Well, what you receive, the power, if you have it in all your body, all your body has it.
Hope: Is it seated in the head?
Eligio: That is, it is seated in the whole body. It extends throughout the body. It does it, everywhere receives it.
Hope: Is it received via the head or via the heart?
Eligio: It arrives via the head, then spreads throughout the body.

Finally, I returned to the idea of how *iyari* is represented in yarn paintings. Eligio interpreted this question to mean, what is the process by which images or visions arrive, and then how does a person translate them into a painting? He explained that the messages from the gods which the person sees through the *iyari* appear as though tape-recorded there, almost as though they were recorded by a video camera or tape recorder. Then the artist can use his or her mind to comprehend the images or the sounds, and make a picture of it. In this way, a person learns many different designs.

Hope: And how do you represent *iyari* in the yarn paintings?
Eligio: *Iyari*? Well, you can present it in the form that you think it. That which comes from them, that which happened, that which the gods did, it is as though you saw it, saw it and it stayed seated in your body. That is what can take place in the yarn

painting. To make designs. Because you carry it in your mind. That is what you will make. No, it's no more than that. From there, then it [the designs] comes out. Different ones. About many things it comes out. They [the gods] tell you a thing, here it comes out [in art]. From the mind. It opens then, to be able to do that.
Hope: Many different designs come forth?
Eligio: Now they come out of there.
Hope: From the heart, from the *iyari*?
Eligio: Yes, from the heart, That is, from the moment when a person learns about this.

A person learns these designs at night, during a ceremony, when a spirit arrives and teaches them. The expression "it comes walking" is another Huichol expression in Spanish referring to the arrival of a spirit during the ceremony. All night the person may learn. The next morning, the artist will have many new designs.

Eligio:.. Because in one night, almost you will...let's suppose that [the ceremony begins] at six or seven o'clock, [and lasts] until midnight. From midnight until five in the morning. That makes about 11 hours, you can be learning about this. It comes walking. [a spirit or god] It comes walking and [what it teaches to you] it stays with you here, here it will stay. In the moment that you do this work [ie., make yarn paintings], you can do it [ie., you have the power and designs] and now it comes out of you. Like a recorded tape, then....
Hope: And with that, a person can make many designs in one day? That many designs come forth quickly?
Eligio: Yes, because there you go ...well, this is all [that you need].

Using the mind, and the ability of the *mara'a kame* to see, an artist can develop many paintings; and all will have the same quality and power as the first.

Eligio: Well then, since you have two, two powers--mental power and knowledge of that which is, that is to say, that which is of the shaman, and mental power is another thing. You can originate (Sp: *inventar*) more [designs]. But with the same power. And there are more. From one, you go on making .. From one, you go on to make four, five, but by shamanic power. And with just mental power, you can go on making another five more. From one [ceremony], that's all. That is mental, to make up more, and that they always come out with the same power.

Fabiano González echoed Eligio's explanations; in particular, that both mind and *iyari* are needed to paint:

Hope: Does a person paint with the *iyari* also?
Fabiano: The *iyari*. That is to say, a person thinks with this, right [indicating head]. But with this what are we going to give? Because if we only had this [the head] and didn't have *iyari*, what would a person do?
Hope: Only with the mind, with only the mind, it's not enough?
Fabiano: No, it doesn't work. With [only] the *iyari*, the mind doesn't work. Then the two work together. For this [to make paintings]. Then also, if all you had was *iyari*, what good would you be? For this reason, a person has both. The *iyari*, and then the two work together. The *iyari* and the mind (Sp: *mente*).

I asked Fabiano what *kupuri* meant. He interpreted this question to mean, what functions does it serve? He responded that a person who had *kupuri* lived a normal, happy, contented life; without *kupuri*, he or she acted thoughtless or crazy.

Hope: And *kupuri*, what does that mean?
Fabiano: ....Without *kupuri*, a person is crazy. He goes around without thinking. And if you have *kupuri*, you live well, contented. There are five meanings. Living contented. Working. Eating. And without *kupuri*, you are crazy, that's how it is. Because you lack *kupuri*, so that you might be all right.

To summarize what Eligio and Fabiano said, ideally artistic production comes from having the *iyari* open to the gods. Achieving a state of openness is something that a person develops through the training required to be a *mara'a kame*; another *mara'a kame* can facilitate this process. With the heart open, tuned to the gods, images and ideas will flow in. Such an artist can attend a ceremony when the door to the spirit world is open, and learn many new designs. By using the mind in conjunction with the heart, the images and ideas are converted to art. The artists emphasized that ideally both mind and *iyari* were required; *iyari* alone was not enough, although it is possible to do paintings solely with the mind.

The Huichol idea is not unlike the western idea of heart and mind. A western artist might say a painting has "heart" or "soul"; but in western terms this attribute tends to mean feeling or emotion. It is not specifically a reference to the supernatural. However, the Huichols take this concept one step further, since the open heart is filled by or linked to the gods. The gods have *iyari* and so do people; ideally the two are linked, as though by a bridge. *Kupuri* is the energy which comes from the gods through this channel.

The Huichol aesthetic ideal is represented by an artist who has his or her *iyari* open to the gods. The artist's *iyari* receives and is charged with *kupuri* carried in this channel. If the artist also has a well-developed mind, he or she will be a good artist; without a good mind, the artist will not be able to express the designs through art.

This Huichol concept can be compared to the description of the good artist from an Aztec codex. The similarities are remarkable.

> The true artist, capable, practicing, skilful,
> maintains dialogue with his heart, meets things with his mind.
>
> The true artist draws out all from his heart: makes things with calm, with sagacity; works like a true Toltec [that is, with skill]; (*Códice Matritense de la Real Academia,* cited in Anderson 1990:153)

The artists' explanations also clarify why I began to feel that it was not necessarily important whether the subject matter of the particular painting comes from a specific dream or vision. What is important is whether the artist is in a state of receptivity or openness to the gods. Out of this openness comes the artistic work, which may have its specific source in a dream, a vision, or an intellectual thought.

Now I will turn to one more Huichol concept which is linked to the ideas of *kupuri* and *iyari*, and which also has considerable significance in relation to yarn painting. This is the idea of *nierika*. If *iyari* is the vehicle by which an artist apprehends or receives messages from the gods, *nierika* is both the artist's vision and ability to see into the world of the gods, and the things which the artist sees there. It seems to correlate with the Aztec concept of *ix*, with its functions of perception, as described above.

Nierika is a word with many shades of meaning in Huichol culture.

Therefore, my goal here will be to illustrate and expand on these meanings so that the total pattern becomes apparent. The order in which I present the ideas is mainly devised for clarity of explanation, rather than relative importance.

Early in his career, Eligio Carrillo described the idea of *nierika* to an American friend named Prem Das (1978:132) [2]: Eligio said, "I want to see into the visionary world...to make good yarn paintings of the gods, spirits, and powers who teach the *mara'akate* ...how to heal and conduct ceremonies. Only by truly seeing them and their hidden world can I attempt to portray them in my paintings."

Prem Das (1979:1) later equated the *nierika* to the idea of a doorway in the mind, which humans enter after death.

> There is a doorway within our minds that usually remains hidden and secret until the time of death. The Huichol word for it is *nieríka* *Nieríka* is a cosmic portway or interface between so-called ordinary and non-ordinary reality. It is a passageway and at the same time a barrier between worlds.

In my interview with Eligio Carrillo, I asked him to expand on the explanation of the *nierika*. He translated *nierika* as mirror.

Eligio: *Nierika*, this means the mirror. It is used to cure, or accordingly to see what there is [in the world of the gods]. That is the meaning of *nierika*. It is the mirror of the Deer-god.

Eligio refers here to one of the tools which Huichol *mara'a kate* use to see into the world of the gods--a mirror. These are often no more than inexpensive, round mirrors about six centimetres in diameter which are sold in Mexican markets. A *mara'a kame* may look into a mirror during a curing ceremony in order to diagnose illness or to communicate with spirits. The Huichol use of mirrors is similar to western use of a crystal ball, or some forms of divination which use water. Eligio refers to this function here. A mirror is a tool to see into or reflect the world of the gods.

Eligio did not understand Prem Das' description of the *nierika* as a doorway; perhaps because the idea of a doorway in the mind is a western notion, not a Huichol one.

Hope: And does *nierika* mean a door also?
Eligio: *Nierika* means a face. That's what it is. It is as though a *nierika* is coming from the gods, it is what you look for there. It is a face. You look for it there, then you carry it here in the mind.
Hope: It is the face of the gods?
Eligio: Yes, which remains here with the person.

Here he refers to a second aspect of *nierika*, which is the face of the gods which a person sees when looking through the mirror. Once the person has seen the face of the gods, he or she carries that face in the mind.

A person who wants to achieve the ability to see into the world of the gods makes the image of a *nierika* as a form of prayer. Then they offer the *nierika* to the gods, praying that the power will be granted.

Eligio: Well, then we look for it [the power of vision], carrying it [a *nierika*] to these places, for five years, you have to be travelling to these places carrying this.

A yarn painting is one form of *nierika*, because it is a representation of the world of the gods and what is seen there. Artist Alejandro López described a *nierika* as being like a telescope. We look into it to see the world of the gods, which appears as though it was very small and far away. Then we paint a picture of what we see through the end of the telescope. He illustrates this telescopic imagery in Plate 36, "The Story of the Ark of *Takutsi Nakawe*" which shows the mythological events of long ago.

The circular image that one sees through the end of a telescope or in the small round mirrors of the *mara'a kate* will look quite similar. Yarn paintings often retain this circular imagery. Sometimes, to emphasize the *nierika* imagery, yarn paintings have a small mirror embedded in the centre of the painting. Another reference to the idea of looking through the *nierika* are the mandala *nierika*s, discussed above. These yarn paintings use a circular image in the centre with symbols or energies radiating around the circle.

The idea of the *nierika* as a mandala-like image may draw on actual visionary experiences. Susana Eger Valadez (1978:40; 1986a) documents the experience of one consultant, who saw spiral-shaped images similar to a mandala while eating peyote. These *nierikas* belonged to the various gods, and were shown to him by the Deer-god; he later drew them for her in pen and ink.

Because *nierika* has the multiple meanings of a representation of the world of the gods, and a prayer for vision, a *nierika* can take many forms. Lumholtz (1900) documented these varied forms, some of which are clearly related to yarn paintings, while others are linked only in theory. Lumholtz made a rough division of *nierikas* into two categories: the front-shield; and all other forms of *nierika*, which he called special *nierikas*.

> The front-shield or *nealíka* is primarily round, because first of all it symbolizes the buckler, which was round; but it has also come to symbolize the face (hence a mask is a *nealíka*) or aspect of a god or person: in fact, it may said to be the Indian expression for a picture, therefore rock carvings are called *nealíka*. The round mirrors bought in Mexican stores are also called by the same name. My Huichol informants, who understood a little Spanish, sometimes even used to call these symbolic objects 'mirrors,' alluding to the pictures shown on them. The holes in the walls of a god-house, --one above the entrance, and a corresponding one at the rear,--which are always round in shape, are also called *nealíka*. The round netted shields...are nealíka, as are also the diminutive ceremonial deer-snares. We shall call these symbolic objects 'front-shields,' substituting at times 'face,' 'aspect,' or 'picture' as names expressive of the Indian thought in particular cases. The front-shields express prayers for rain, corn, or health (Lumholtz 1900:108).

What Lumholtz called front-shields are the most direct ancestors of the yarn paintings. When one looks at his illustrations and then at modern paintings, one can see many similarities. Front-shields were usually round objects made of bamboo sticks wrapped with coloured cord or yarn to form a pattern. Sometimes the pattern illustrated animals or other symbolic objects such as people, stars, or clouds. Some shields had a circle or geometric design at the centre, surrounded by bands of colour. Some shields are entirely filled in with yarn, while others have holes or gaps in the yarn. Some have feathers attached to the centre of the shield, or puffs of cotton around the edge.

Special front-shields had different shapes, and were made of other materials (Lumholtz 1900:131-137). One version which bears a close relationship to yarn paintings is a round disk of solidified volcanic ash with symbols cut in it. These disks might be solid, or have a hole in the centre. They might be placed on altars in the god-house, or embedded in the wall of a temple or god-house.

According to Fabiano González, the *tsikürü* (Hui: "god's eye") is also a *nierika*. These are offerings made in the form of a cross, with one or more yarn rhomboids attached. During the Drum Ceremony, these offerings are placed in the ground in front of the children as a prayer that the eye of the god will fall on the child (Lumholtz 1900:154).

Yet another type of *nierika* is Huichol ceremonial face painting. These are elaborate designs representing symbols associated with various deities. They are painted on the face using a yellow root called *urxa* which grows in *Wirikuta*. Santos Daniel's "*Nierika* Symbols which Huichols Paint on their Faces in Ceremonies" (Plate 25), shows an abstract arrangement of these designs. Plate 35, Gonzalo Hernández' "*Yokawima*, Mother of the Deer," shows a deity with her face painting.

To summarize the meanings explained by Lumholtz, the *nierika* includes the following concepts: Face: painting on a face: eye: mirror: round object with hole or mirror at centre: object, other than round, with hole or eye depicted at the centre: a picture: a picture of the gods or symbols associated with gods.

Clearly the *nierika* is linked to the idea of faces and eyes, and the depiction of these features. The mirror reflects the face and the eye and in a way is a depiction of the face; so it too is a *nierika*. The hole in an object is a means of seeing through it, and the eye of the seer looks through it. The ability to see can be two-way, since the eye of a god can look at humans; but the human's eye can also look at the god.

Lumholtz does not seem to have understood some of the metaphysical or visionary implications of the *nierika*. To Lumholtz, the *nierika* was purely a symbolic object representing the world of the gods, or a prayer for shaman's vision. He does not mention the deeper set of meanings: that the *nierika* is a tool for achieving vision, and a representation of actual dreams and visions.

Thus, as this discussion makes clear, *nierika* is a basic aesthetic concept in Huichol art. In a sense, most Huichol art is a *nierika*, since most art depicts the world of the gods in one way or another. A yarn painting is simply a particular type of *nierika*. However, *nierika* is not just a synonym for the western word "art." *Nierika* extends beyond the art object itself to encompass the capacity of the artist to see. It includes both the visionary capacities and the content of the vision itself.

Nierika is not really the same as the soul concepts which were discussed above. *Nierika* is not a type of "soul." However, it might be conceptualized as a capacity of the body, or what López Austin calls an "animistic centre." The seeing functions of *nierika*, and the correlation between eye, face, and vision, may be similar to what López Austin (1988:180-190) describes as the Aztec concept of *ix*, meaning face and perceptual functions.

MAGICAL POWER IN YARN PAINTINGS

Finally, I will turn here to one more idea related to the mystical roles of yarn paintings; whether the paintings themselves have any form of power. Are the paintings simply representations of vision, of *nierika* and *iyari*; or do the paintings have in themselves some form of linkage to the supernatural? Most of my information on the powers of yarn paintings comes from Chavelo González. It is supplemented and confirmed by Eligio Carrillo.

I asked Chavelo whether Huichols made yarn paintings in the past; and if so, what they were used for. He described the traditional functions of the paintings. He said: They always used to make yarn paintings round. They represent owing a vow to all the powers of nature: the air, the ocean, the earth, all the things which make up nature. It is modern to make them as a square, even though they may contain original designs.

I asked whether the Huichols ever displayed the yarn paintings, the way that western buyers do. He replied that: under the old tradition, they could not put yarn paintings in the house where people lived. If a person made a yarn painting, he must put it in a sacred house, called *rxiriki* (Hui: small family temple). It should not be left hanging around. Once inside the temple, the yarn painting never left it. It represented the temple itself. A person could take out the other offerings, but never the yarn painting.

I asked if all Huichols had these in their *rxiriki*. He replied: Everyone has them in their temple. Well, some have them, some may not. Perhaps for some people, their parents never taught them the meaning. But it is very important not to take it out. It is like cutting off your arm to do so. Chavelo elaborates that the painting is as much a part of the temple as a person's arm is of their body. He asks whether you would cut off your own arm? A person can go in and look at it, but not take it out

Given this important religious meaning, I asked whether it was considered acceptable to make yarn paintings to sell. He replied: It is all right to make copies and sell them, as long as you do not move the original. The copies can have the same meanings, but it is all right to move them.

It is likely that this distinction between sacred original and copy is an old one within Huichol culture. Lumholtz (1902:v. 2,169-171, 181-2), for example, found that the Huichols refused to give him the original statue of the Fire-god, kept in a sacred cave near Santa Catarina; but would make him a copy of the god for his collection [3].

The original yarn paintings, the oldest designs, are representations of the temple itself and the offerings inside it. Plate 8, "The Temple of the Deer-god," represents an original painting. Chavelo describes this painting as a representation of the temple of the Huichols. The temple is the Deer-god itself; the objects in front are the offerings to the deer. He commented that this is an excellent painting because it is original; that is, it is an old style of painting, made in a traditional way as a circle. He also implies that the concepts it depicts are also traditional.

Since he described the original paintings as being a conventional representation of the temple, I asked if the Huichols also depicted peyote visions; that is, whether the paintings could be used to show personal experience as well as a traditional design. He replied that if a person has a peyote vision, he or she can make a yarn painting. It is a reminder of what they saw. They can keep it for when they get old. As they go on in life, they can keep the painting, and add others to it. However, they must keep it well guarded.

Eligio Carrillo confirmed a number of the points made by Chavelo about the relationship between traditional and modern yarn paintings. He agreed that the original yarn paintings are made as prayers or offerings: however, it is acceptable to make copies to support oneself.

Eligio: For this reason [as a religious offering], we use the *nierika*. For this reason, we make it. But we don't make it to sell. Those which we [sell are] copies. [The originals] are the basis [the foundation], which, like those we make here, they are carried to that place [ie., taken on pilgrimages].

The yarn paintings themselves represent powers, whether they are the original ones or made for sale. The powers and where they come from are depicted in the paintings.

Eligio: But they are powers, how a person should make them. What is it that they contain. What is it that we search for. Which is the power. Which are the [cardinal] places of the gods. Everything. Everything. Well drawn out, we have here. But we draw it out of this [the *nierika* or yarn painting], where we learn. Because it is the mirror. For this reason, we can explain, a person can explain it his self. That is what this contains.

Hope: The yarn painting is like a mirror of the gods. And you bring it forth from that?

Eligio: Yes, exactly. It is representing it, now, that which it contains. What is it that he is seeing here, the shaman. Translating it with which part, with which colours, all that.

I went on to ask Eligio whether yarn paintings in themselves had a form of power. He said that they might, but that their power depended on the power of the person who was making it.

Hope: This is a question that many people have asked me. If there is power in the painting itself; for example--if I buy a painting, I am a buyer and I buy a painting--does that painting have the power of a shaman also?

Eligio: Yes, because it carries all the power that there is. That's how it is. For this reason, many times, many people don't know what it contains. Well then, as I am explaining, all the powers that you want to know about, you will know which are the powers. That which it contains, in my opinion, it has to carry some of the power of a shaman.

Hope: Then if I touch that painting, I can feel the powers that it contains, which the shaman put in that painting.

Eligio: That is what I was saying, with faith. If you do it with faith, yes. Yes, you can do that. Everything can be done with faith. That's how it is.

Eligio made a further distinction between original power--power which a person had earned for himself or herself through shamanic training -- and derived power, which could be gifted from the *mara'a kame* or artist to another person when the artist taught another person his or her designs. While the derived power might still have some force, it was not equal to the original power. Only if a person undertook his or her own training would he or she acquire his or her own designs and thus the power that went with them.

Hope: And if a person is not a shaman, and makes a yarn painting, does it have the same power?
Eligio: It's less then. For example, if you [Hope] make one, it is less. It is less. Because it doesn't have the original power... That is how things are in this world. It's like, now, [my apprentice] I passed my power to him. Well now he is doing the designs that I did, but it is second-hand power, it isn't worth anything, or it is worth less; they are very pretty but it is from the mind of another person... for example, if you do this [ie., copy an artists's design], "Well, I am going to make the same thing." You make it up. It is made up from your mind. I can do the same, but it is not made up from what you did. That's how it is. Those are the powers here. What has value, the one who is making it up, because he has it [his heart] open to make and unmake. That's how it is.
Hope: Then he has to follow the path of a shaman also in order to have different ones [ie. his own yarn painting designs]?
Eligio: Yes, well that one means..but that he might change, that he changes the way he works and everything. It is also very difficult, to change.
Hope: Why does he need to change how he works?
Eligio: Because it is my style.
H Why [change]?
Eligio: So he can do his own style. The way he works, where he gets his designs. He must change his designs and the colours. Because not all of us artists work the same. He has his work, he has his difference, that's how the power is here.

Thus, these interviews indicate that some yarn paintings have shamanic power while others do not. The original paintings, made and kept in the temple, had important sacred meaning and power. The copies do not seem to carry the same power, or the same restrictions on their use.

The interview with Eligio indicates that an artist can transfer his own power into the physical painting, but only if the artist has power himself. Designs which are taught to, or copied by others will not have the same force as the original designs.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

[1] López Austin uses a variety of words to refer to the heart. I presume these are variations in meaning in Aztec. They include *yol, yollo, yulli, teyolia*. These words seem to me to be clearly linked with the Huichol word, *iyari*. While it is usually written with an "r" in the literature, *iyari* is often pronounced *iyarli* with the "r" and "l" sounds rolled together (as in the English "charlie"). This pronunciation seems even more like the Aztec.

[2] Prem Das is also known as Paul C. Adams.

[3] The artists' inclination to make copies creates problems for some dealers at the upper end of the market. Western buyers want original art which is unique and one of a kind, rather than copies, especially if they are paying a high price. This position has become a problem for some of the gift and fine art galleries, since the customers expect unique pieces, and the artists are inclined to make copies. One gallery owner solved this problem by telling the Huichols that they should only offer him original designs; and that if they subsequently make copies, he does not want to see them.

Galleries at the lower end of the market do not seem particularly concerned about copying; as noted in Chapter Four, copies of paintings by Ramón Medina and Guadelupe de la Cruz Ríos are still sold today.

Chapter 9
CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions can be drawn about the Huichol aesthetic model from this study of commercial yarn paintings? What do yarn paintings tell us about why the Huichol make art, and what ideas guide their artistic choices? Here I will try to go below the surface details, and draw out some underlying principles.

There is no question that financial motivations play a part in the making of yarn paintings. The artists make yarn paintings to sell and support their families; most artists have few alternative ways of making a living. Many older artists have little or no education, and their alternative source of cash income is dangerous work in the fields or in manual labour for low wages. The importance of economic motivations is also shown by the fact that many artists are abandoning yarn painting for arts such as beadwork, which they consider more profitable and increasingly popular. As I noted above, the artists who are presently making yarn paintings seem mainly to be those who have a genuine preference for this particular art-form.

However, does the importance of financial motivations mean that yarn paintings have lost whatever other aesthetic meaning they once had? As Anderson (1990:234) asked, does an ethnic art necessarily discard the sophisticated aesthetic system of the traditional culture when it becomes commercialized. I would suggest that, in the case of the yarn paintings, this depressing scenario has not happened. The reason lies in the fortunate coinciding of the aesthetic values of the western buyers and the Huichol sellers.

Both Huichols and westerners have reached a tacit agreement that yarn paintings should be about the traditional Huichol religion and culture. The western preference grows out of a long-standing interest for the exotic in indigenous arts--a preference which Graburn (1978) poked fun at in his title, "I Like Things to Look more Different than that Stuff Did." Western buyers particularly like ethnic art which deals with religious themes or has a myth attached to it, or an object has actually been used in a ritual--a desire which Mexican sellers of Indian masks are quick to capitalize on. Why western art buyers feel this need to touch and own the religious artifact from other cultures would make a fascinating anthropological study in itself; and several authors have made a start at explaining it (Graburn 1978; Greenhalgh 1978).

The important point here is that the western preference coincides with the religious and visionary themes the Huichol yarn painters prefer to make. In the analysis of yarn painting subjects, I noted that yarn paintings are almost exclusively religious in content. The one exception seems to have been a brief foray in the 1960s when the yarn painters began to use designs such as Walt Disney characters or Che Guevara. This exception does indicate that the artists might produce non-religious themes again if the market demanded it of them, just as many artists are now turning to the more profitable beadwork.

Fortunately the market has not pushed the artists in the direction of reproducing commercial art from western culture; instead, the dealers urge the artists to make designs from Huichol tradition. This encouragement has actually enabled the artists to remain within the context of Huichol aesthetic values, and has led to a flowering of Huichol art in yarn paintings. I would suggest that, far from being a degenerated art, yarn paintings continue to manifest outstanding creativity within the Huichol artistic and philosophical tradition.

Yarn paintings seem to exemplify a number of Huichol aesthetic ideals; however, three seem primary: the artist takes pride in workmanship; the artist is able to understand and explain the meaning of the painting; and the artist has his or her heart open to the gods. When all of these conditions are filled, the art becomes a principal vehicle for communication and teaching between deities and humans, and from one human to another.

To clarify what these statements mean, let me first review again the poem which Anderson (1990:153-4) cites from an Aztec codex on the difference between the good and the bad artist; then I will show how these ideas express themselves in yarn paintings:

> The carrion artist works at random; sneers at the people;
> makes things opaque; brushes across the surface of the face of things;
> works without care; defrauds people; is a thief....
>
> The good painter is a toltec, an artist;
> he creates with red and black ink, with black water....
>
> The good painter is wise,
> God is in his heart.

He puts divinity into things:
he converses with his own heart.

He knows the colors, he applies them and shades them;
he draws feet and faces.
he puts in the shadows, he achieves perfection.
He paints the colors of all the flowers,
as if he were a Toltec.

In this poem, certain themes are expressed. The bad artist obscures meaning; he or she works at random, so that he or she deceives people. In this sense, he or she is more than a thief of material things; he or she is a thief of better understanding of the gods. In contrast, the good artist is in touch with the divine through his or her heart; and he or she expresses this divinity in such a way that other people can understand it as well. The artist is a communicator, a teacher, and revealer of the world of the gods. The phrases concerning knowing the colours, and drawing to perfection suggest to me much more than simply an ability to draw a realistic representation of a flower or person. As Anderson (1990:147) points out, the Aztecs usually painted in a style that was an amalgam of both realism and conventionalized representation, just as the Huichols do in their yarn paintings. To me, the statements about accuracy represent an accurate knowing and depiction of the world of the gods.

In the statements made to me by the Huichol artists, one finds similar themes expressed. The artists clearly take pride in their workmanship, shown in a number of ways. The yarn painting should conform to basic technical standards, with the wax smooth and the yarn tightly filled in. There should be no gaps, or yarn lifting off the backing. Workmanship goes beyond this basic, technical level; and extends into the use of colours and designs. Colours should be "well-combined," a concept of colour use which has broad ramifications. Combining colours is based on the idea of complementary opposition, expressed as *fuerte* and *bajito*, or going up and coming down. Movement between these complementary values is shown to be a basic aesthetic value within Huichol art and culture generally.

Generally, the artists do not try to achieve realism or mimetic representation--the effort to portray things as the eye sees them--in yarn paintings. On the contrary, the style of representation ranges from somewhat realistic to quite abstract. Many objects are indicated by stylized images, which might be said to form a visual vocabulary of yarn paintings. This visual vocabulary is evolving as innovative artists develop new ideas and their designs enter the repertoire; however, in general the imagery is remarkably conservative, and the same images tend to be used over and over by all yarn painters.

Some of the images in yarn painting, as well as the basic models of composition, are similar to those used in the traditional arts of weaving and embroidery; examples are the composition based on the five directions, or on the row of repeating figures. The mandala *nierika* also draws on traditional artifacts such as sacred yarn paintings, or front-shields as described by Lumholtz. Other designs and images appear to be modern, such as the depictions of pilgrimages and ceremonies.

It seems that in their criteria of workmanship, the artists are bringing forward into the modern art-form of yarn painting a number of the traditional aesthetic values. They draw on traditional arts for colour use, basic styles of representation, design vocabulary, and models of composition. In fact, they have changed little from Lumholtz's (1902: v 2, 214) description, written ninety years ago:

> With the Huichol, all designs are derived from the animal and plant world, from objects important in the domestic economy and religious life of the tribe, and from natural phenomena familiar to the people. The designs are found almost entirely in the wearing apparel of the people and may be woven, embroidered, or formed in beadwork.

The second basic concept of artistry was that the artist should understand and be able to explain the meaning of a yarn painting. Related to it is the idea that meaning can be explained only by the artist who makes the painting. I have described how Lupe's family insisted that I not ask them to explain another artist's paintings, and emphasized that I should ask only the original artist. I have also cited Chavelo González and Eligio Carrillo, who agreed that it was incumbent upon the artist to explain the meaning to anyone who asks. The learner has a reciprocal obligation to ask the artist for an explanation, and not to make a premature guess.

These obligations clarify why the Huichol artists are willing to explain the meaning of their yarn paintings to buyers. It is not so much because they have a specific desire to teach westerners about their culture, as I originally hypothesized; but rather that there is a general obligation within the culture to respond to an honest inquiry. Since most dealers are genuine enthusiasts of the art and usually ask for an explanation, the yarn painters interpret their questions as a sincere interest in the meaning, and make an honest effort to respond.

This interest in explaining meaning also recalls Alejandro López' statement that when he was young, he did not understand the meaning of yarn paintings, but simply sold them as though they were apples. As he grew older, he began to understand how the paintings explained Huichol philosophy, and especially the origins of the world and the Huichol customs. Now he tries to understand all these ideas, and explain them well to the buyers of his paintings.

The Huichol aesthetic value can be summed up in the words of the Aztec codex. A good artist explains and makes meanings clear; a bad artist obscures meaning, and deceives the questioner.

The aesthetic ideal of explaining meaning is balanced by a restriction on imparting religious knowledge to outsiders. In part, this reluctance is pragmatic, and may have historical roots in the persecution of Huichols for their religious beliefs. In part, it may be internal to the culture, since even Huichol artists were unsure how much they should say about the deeper, visionary meanings of the paintings; as Eligio Carrillo pointed out, some people will not even teach members of their own family. The dividing line seems to be that almost any sacred concept can be portrayed visually in a yarn painting, but not every concept can be explained verbally to an outsider. I often found the artists very careful about what they would or would not say. If I already knew or could guess what a design meant, they would confirm it; but if I did not know, they might not explain it.

The third aesthetic value is that artistic inspiration comes from the gods. The artists pointed out that two faculties were needed in order to paint: the mind or mental power, including imagination; and the heart, called *iyari*. An artist could paint solely from the mind; however, more depth and vision came when the heart was also open to the gods.

The Huichol aesthetic ideal seems to be of an individual artist in direct communication with the gods. The artist uses art as a way of developing a channel of communication with the gods, and reflecting back to others the results of the exchange. Art is not only a visual prayer, as Lumholtz described, but also a demonstration that vision exists. The artist ideally has an obligation to explain to others his or her vision. The yarn painting is one way of doing this.

The ideal of the artist in communication with the gods is very much like the ideal of the *mara'a kame* in Huichol culture. The *mara'a kame* also sees into the world of the gods, and communicates his or her vision in songs and ceremonies; some *mara'a kate* also use their ability in order to cure. The similarity of the visionary process suggests that, at the upper level of achievement, the artist is almost an alternate or complementary shamanic career. The source of power and the process of envisioning seem the same as that used by singing shamans. Only the means of expressing vision differ; the artist expresses it in visual art, while the *mara'a kame* expresses it in song or ceremony.

However, this ideal of visionary communication is not within the grasp of all artists. A number of the artists I interviewed have either chosen not to, or been unable to complete themselves as *mara'a kate*. For these artists, painting opens an alternate career; and one which seems highly-respected within the culture.

These findings suggest that there is a deep aesthetic structure underlying Huichol yarn paintings. The aesthetic structure manifests traditional concepts of human beings in relation to the cosmos. One example is the use of colour. Deep aesthetic values are expressed in the use of *fuerte* and *bajito* colours to express the concept of dynamic equilibrium, which is linked to ideals of shamanic performance. *Fuerte* and *bajito* also express the idea of rising and falling, going up and coming down, which are again linked to models of shamanic practice and the structure of the cosmos.

A second example of a deep aesthetic structure is the linkage which I have demonstrated between the concept of the soul, shamanic vision, and the production of art. These ideas continue to guide Huichol artists, even in the production of a modern commercial art-form such as yarn painting.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has methodological implications for future research. It demonstrates that the aesthetic analysis of art is a powerful research tool for the analysis of a culture's philosophy, even when the art-form is a modern, commercial, ethnic art. This study shows that such research can make a significant contribution to understanding a culture's philosophy.

I suggest that aesthetic analysis is likely to have considerable value when applied to other modern indigenous arts as well. For example, one might ask what can be learned from the aesthetic analysis of Canadian Inuit (Eskimo) prints and soapstones, or from modern Ojibwa and West Coast Indian silkscreen prints.

The power of the analysis also suggests that there is a considerable amount still to be learned about the aesthetic principles which underly both yarn paintings and other Huichol arts. I have pointed out some new directions for research, such as analysis of the meaning of colours, and the model of the artist within the cosmos. I suspect that there is a great deal more still to be learned about these topics within Huichol culture.

A particularly interesting direction of research is the linkage I have made here between López Austin's (1988) theories of soul concepts, especially as manifested in animistic centres of the body, and the production of art. Anderson (1990:241, 247-252) concludes that religious motivations underlie the production of art in most cultures; however, the mechanisms which link the two still remain obscure. I suggest here that concepts of the soul as seated in the body may be the connecting link between art and the divine, at least for some cultures. Some other authors, such as Laderman (1991) and Atkinson (1989), have drawn similar analogies about the link between aesthetics and the soul. There is a voluminous anthropological literature on soul concepts, and an equally voluminous literature on the production of art. What conclusions about cross-cultural aesthetics might be derived by putting the two together? As I have demonstrated here, the results can be enlightening.

This research also has methodological implications for research on the art of shamanic vision. The study demonstrates that the process of transferring shamanic vision into painting is complex. The Huichol artists made clear that there are gradations of vision which people experience, and gradations in what they portray in art. I found that some artists are consistently visionary, and constantly use visions as a source of design images; some artists are not visionary themselves, but use "borrowed" imagery from people who are visionary; and in between is a range of painters who are occasionally visionary, and use their own visions and those of others to varying degrees. All of this indicates that the link between vision and art is a complex one, and that these complexities need to be taken into account in constructing theories and hypotheses regarding the art of shamanic vision.

APPLIED CONSEQUENCES OF THE RESEARCH

While this study was not intended as applied anthropology, it has produced some conclusions which have important considerations for policy-makers and dealers in Huichol art. These are words of warning for the future of Huichol yarn paintings.

The study demonstrates both the outstanding creativity and the extreme fragility of Huichol art. The paintings are a flowering of indigenous creativity which is a gift to the world; however, this unique art-form could be destroyed quickly. One way to destroy the art is simply economic. If the artists cannot make a living by painting, or if other arts are more profitable, most artists will stop making yarn paintings. This process may already be underway; as I have demonstrated, most yarn painters are older, and started making yarn paintings from ten to thirty years ago. Few young Huichol artists make yarn paintings; most now do beadwork.

It is important to remember that Huichol artists come from an acutely impoverished population; hunger and malnutrition, even death from starvation, are still ever-present concerns in Huichol society. The artists cannot afford to make art for art's sake; they must have a reasonable financial return. Therefore, the higher the prices paid for these paintings, the more likely it is that the art-form will survive. Collectors, dealers, and friends of Huichol culture all need to remember this fact, and do everything we can to ensure adequate return for the artists. Many dealers now recognize this fact; and have said to me that the best way to help the Huichols is simply by helping to market their arts, and creating new markets for their work in other countries.

The second way that this art can be threatened and perhaps even destroyed is by any effort to tell the artists what to make. The artists are desperate enough financially that they will paint Mickey Mouse or Che Guevara, if that is what the market asks of them. My interviews with the artists indicate that they are very sensitive to the market, and have already tried to modify aspects, such as their use of materials, to accommodate the buyers. The unique Huichol aesthetic character of the art seems to be preserved by the fortuitous agreement between the buyers and the artists that the paintings should reflect Huichol tradition and religion. However, this is a fragile balance, and it could be upset.

One Canadian experience with indigenous art is relevant. My mother, Dr. Margaret MacLean, was one of Canada's first dealers in Canadian Inuit (Eskimo) art; she particularly valued the prints made by the community of Povungnituk in the

1960s. According to her, the artists of this community maintained an exceptional rawness and dynamism in their work, especially in how they used the stone which was used to make prints. They often allowed the raw stone to encircle the design, incised designs in it, and used the stone to create positive and negative interactions of space.

The Canadian government sent western art instructors to the Arctic to help Inuit artists in other communities; but for seven years, the artists of Povungnituk refused this "help" (Myers 1976). Finally, in the early 1970s, they accepted. Art instructors were sent to them, who told them that western buyers do not like to see the raw stone, but rather wanted more polished, finely-finished work. As a result, the artists of Povungnituk stopped using the stone in all the interesting ways they had in the 1960s, and their art lost much of its initial verve and dynamism.

In my opinion, the sophisticated aesthetic system which underlies the glowing colours and unique designs of Huichol yarn paintings is equally vulnerable. As I have demonstrated, a complex philosophical structure guides the artists' apparently simple choices such as what colours to use. Any attempt to change what the artists are doing--or worse still, to teach them how to improve their art--could undermine the beliefs which make it unique. The worst move would be to send western art instructors to "help" the artists, as Canada did.

Perhaps the best for all concerned is simply to do nothing, and to allow the artists to determine in what direction their art will grow. After all, it is they who have had the wisdom to adapt their ancient culture, and its beliefs, in order to create this unique and original art.

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APPENDIX 1
GLOSSARY

HUICHOL TERMS

hikuri - peyote cactus (*Lophophora williamsii*).

iku - corn.

itari - decorated board serving as a "bed" for gods, a yarn painting; a blanket or mat which the mara'a kame places on the ground during a ceremony.

iyari - heart, soul, memory.

katira - candle.

Kieri - hallucinogenic plant; evil form identified as *Datura inoxia*; beneficient form identified generally as another species of *Solandra*.

kupuri - life-force, energy.

mara'a kame (Pl. mara'a kate) - A ceremonial leader, healer, and singer; a shaman-priest.

muwieri - shaman's plume; a carved stick with feathers attached to one end; also used to refer to deer's antlers.

nawa - corn beer, called tejuino in Spanish.

nierika - yarn painting. Also means shamanic vision, and that which is seen using vision. Related concepts include face (of a person or god), eye, mirror, any painting or depiction of deities, face painting designs.

putsi - bowl or cup used as incense burner

Reunar - volcano in desert of Wirikuta. Site of birth of the sun, and pilgrimage destination.

rukuri - gourd shell votive bowl.

rxiriki - small god-house.

Takutsi Nakawe - Grandmother Growth, Goddess of Creation and Fertility.

takwatsi - rectangular basket used by mara'a kate to store religious tools such as shaman's plumes.

Tamatsi Kauyumari - Deer-god; a manifestation of the Deer-spirit.

Tatei Haramara - the Pacific Ocean and sacred rock at San Blas, Nayarit.

Tatei Matinieri - a spring in the desert of Wirikuta.

Tatei Rapawiyeme - sacred site in south, associated with Lake Chapala.

Tatei Werika Uimari - Young Mother Eagle Girl, a Goddess who holds the Earth in her claws.

Tatei Yurianaka - Our Mother, the fertile Earth.

Tayau - the Sun-god.

tépu - three-legged upright log drum.

tsikürü - "god's eye" or thread cross. Is also a form of nierika.

ürü - prayer arrow; carved or decorated stick, often with miniature objects attached which represent prayers to deities.

ürükate - ancestors of the Huichol people.

uweni - elaborate armchair made with wood splints and backrest, often used by shamans in ceremony.

Watakame - The Clearer of the Fields, a mythological character who is the ancestor of the modern Huichols.

Wirikuta - desert north of San Luis Potosí where Huichols make pilgrimage to collect peyote; Huichols often refer to this area in Spanish as Real de Catorce and write it as Real 14.

Yokawima - Mother of the Deer.

Zitacua - Huichol colony in Tepic, founded c. 1990.

SPANISH TERMS

bajito - soft, low, descending, coming down. Used in relation to colours.

barranca - canyon; used to refer to lower slopes of Huichol Sierra, leading toward the Chapalagana River.

brujo - sorcerer.

Cambio de las Varas - Changing of the Rods of Power. Ceremony to change civil governors in the Sierra.

cantador - singing shaman.

cargo - a burden, position of responsibility or community obligations, especially in indigenous religious ceremony or civil government.

Cera de Campeche - an orange beeswax from the state of Campeche, considered the best adhesive for yarn paintings.

copal - dried tree resin burned as incense.

combi - a minibus, a collective taxi (from Volkswagen van).

compadre, comadre, compadrazgo - godfather, godmother, the custom of godparenting. Social relationship which derives from Catholic custom of sponsoring a child at baptism.

cosmovisión - cosmic or mystical vision.

cuadro, cuadra - picture, a yarn painting.

dibujo - design, the main elements of a yarn painting.

empeyotado - under the influence of peyote. Often used in reference to visionary states people experience after eating peyote.

esquite - toasted or parched corn.

fiesta - party, celebration. Used by Huichols to describe fertility and harvest ceremonies.

Fiesta de Pachitas - Ash Wednesday.

Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanías (FONART) - Mexican government craft marketing agency.

fondo - background, used to refer to blocks of solid colour behind the main designs of a yarn painting.

fuerte - strong, bright. Used in relation to colours.

HUICOT - An acronym of Huichol, Cora, and Tepehuane. A plan to develop services in the Huichol Sierra during the 1970s.

Instituto National Indigenista (INI) - National Indian Institute. Government body which formulates policy and provides services to indigenous people.

patrón - employer. Often a long-standing relationship.

peyote - variant of the Aztec word, peyotl, used for a hallucinogenic cactus (*Lophophora williamsii*).

poderoso - powerful.

pollero - chicken-carrier; a rural bus with rack for market produce on top.

primo - cousin.

rancho - isolated farm or homestead.

La Raza - Mexican race; popular term for the Mexican people which emphasizes indigenous roots. La pura Raza, used by Huichols to mean pure Indian.

rellenar el fondo - fill in the background of a yarn painting with yarn.

Semana Santa - Easter week.

subedito - rising, going up. Used in relation to colours.

tabla - board, a yarn painting.

tabla de cera - waxed board, a yarn painting.

tabla votiva - votive board, a yarn painting.

tejuino - corn beer.

venado - deer.

Union de Comunidades Indígenas Huicholes (UCIH), Jalisco - Union of Huichol Indian Communities of Jalisco.

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE USED WITH ARTISTS

1. How did you begin to make yarn paintings?

2. Who taught you?

3. What kind of yarn paintings did you make at first?

4. What ideas/philosophy did you want to express in those days?

5. How have your yarn paintings changed over the years (e.g., in style, colour, designs, methods of manufacture)?

6. Has your philosophy changed as well?

7. What do you think of the yarn paintings which the artists are making nowadays?

8. In what direction do you think yarn paintings will change in the future?

9. What are you trying to say to North Americans or those who buy the paintings through your yarn paintings. What lesson are you trying to teach to the world?

10. Have you talked to people who buy yarn paintings? What do they say to you, what have you learned from those who buy: for example, what sorts of things they want or don't want?

11. What do these words mean to you? (*iyari*, *kupuri*, *nierika*)?

12. Have you been to *Wirikuta*? How many times? Are you a *mara'a kame*? A singer?

13. Do you like to make yarn paintings? Does it give you pleasure? How do you feel when you are making yarn paintings?

14. Are there any other questions which I should ask about yarn paintings?

15. Where were you born? Do you speak Huichol? Have you attended school? To what grade?

APPENDIX 3
LIST OF ARTISTS REFERRED TO IN TEXT

This list comprises the names of Huichol artists cited in the text of the study, or listed as painters in the list of plates. Some of the artists I have met and interviewed; others are known only from their signatures on the back of their paintings. This list forms a partial list of Huichol artists.

It is organized in alphabetical order by father's surname; according to Mexican practice, the father's father's surname is given, followed by the mother's father's surname. In some cases, both surnames are unknown. A few names are known only in Huichol.

Barajas (apparently also called Guadalupe Barajaz de la Cruz, Lirma Guadalupe Barojo de la Cruz, Guadalupe Baroja del Naranjo, Lirma Guadalupe Barojo de la Cruz?)

Francisco Bautista - one of most senior yarn painters, from San Andrés

Higinio Bautista Bautista - from San Andrés, son of Nicolas Bautista

Nicolas Bautista - from San Andrés

José Bautista Carrillo - from San Andrés

Eliseo Benítez Flores - apprentice of José Benítez Sánchez

José Benítez Sánchez - one of most senior yarn painters, now living in Zitacua, Tepic

Cecilio Carrillo Bautista - brother of Santos Daniel Carrillo Jiménez, from San Andrés

Eligio Carrillo Vicente - from Santiago region, one of most senior yarn painters, worked with Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos

Santos Daniel Carrillo Jiménez - from San Andrés

Vicente Carrillo Medina - from San Andrés

Eliseo Castro Villa - from San Andrés

José Castro

Emilio de la Cruz Benítez - apprentice of José Benítez Sánchez

Guadalupe (Lupe) de la Cruz Ríos - from Santiago region, former yarn painter, widow of Ramón Medina Silva

Martin de la Cruz Díaz - apprentice of José Benítez Sánchez

Reymundo de la Rosa - one of most senior painters, worked with Ramón Medina Silva

Ceferino Díaz Benítez - apprentice of José Benítez Sánchez

Cristobal González - from Santiago region

David González Sánchez - from Santiago region

José Isabel (Chavelo) González de la Cruz - from Amatlán de Jora, married to Kuka, a niece of Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos

Fabiano González Ríos - from Santiago region, *primo* of Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos

Guadalupe González Ríos - brother of Fabiano González Ríos, from Santiago region,

M. González

Hakatemi

Gonzálo Hernández - from San Andrés, worked with Mariano Valadez

Heucame

Andreas Jesucóta Cahtera de la Cruz

Alejandro López de la Torre - yarn painter from Santa Catarina district, formerly worked with Mariano Valadez

Ramón Medina Silva - one of most senior yarn painters, husband of Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos, consultant to anthropologists Furst, Myerhoff, and Mexican author, Fernando Benítez

Cresencio Pérez Robles - from Santiago region, one of most senior yarn painters

Maximino Renteria de la Cruz - apprentice of José Benítez Sánchez

Modesto Rivera Lemus - from Santiago region, apprentice of Eligio Carrillo

Tutukila (Tiburcio Carrillo Sandoval) - instructor of Mariano Valadez

Urra Temai

Mariano Valadez - one of most senior yarn painters, co-founder of Huichol Center for Cultural Survival and Traditional Arts

Antonio Vicente Bautista

APPENDIX 4

COLOUR PLATES

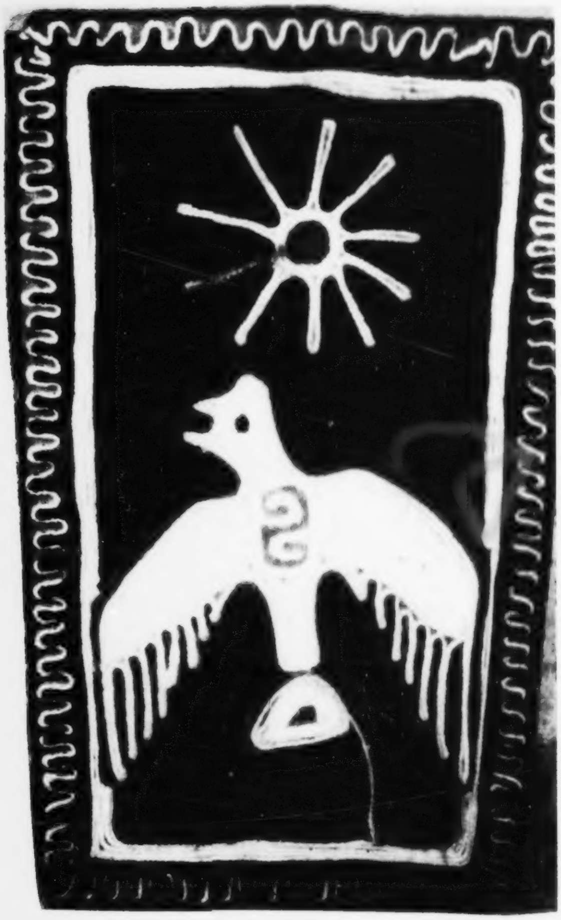


Plate 1

"Eagle and *Nierika*"
by unknown artist.
Courtesy, Instituto
Nacional Indigenista.

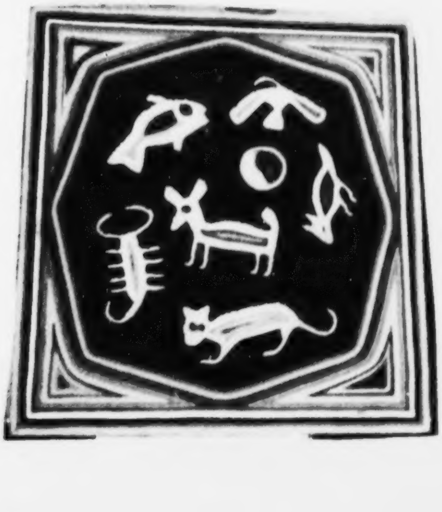


Plate 2

"Huichol Star Constellations"
by Eliseo Castro Villa.
Courtesy, Marina Anguiano

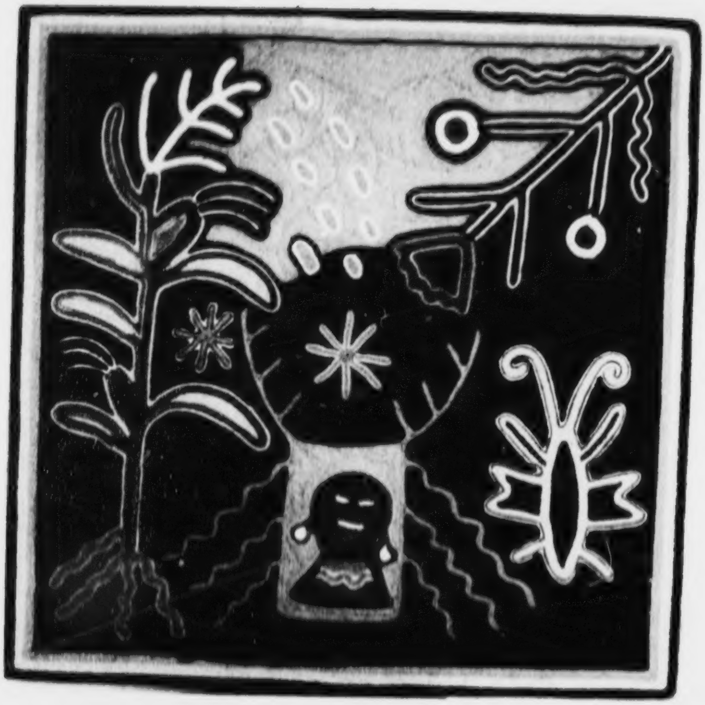
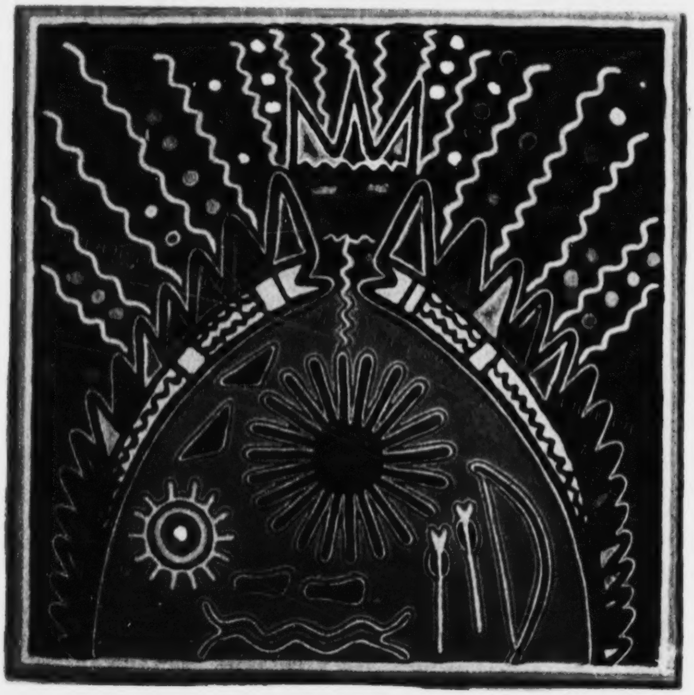


Plate 3

"The Goddess
of the Corn-field"
by Cristobal
González.
Courtesy, Ruth
Gruhn and
Alan Bryan

Plate 4

"The Birth of
the Sun-god
at *Reunar*, a
Volcano in *Wirikuta*"
by Urra Temai.
Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn
and Alan Bryan.



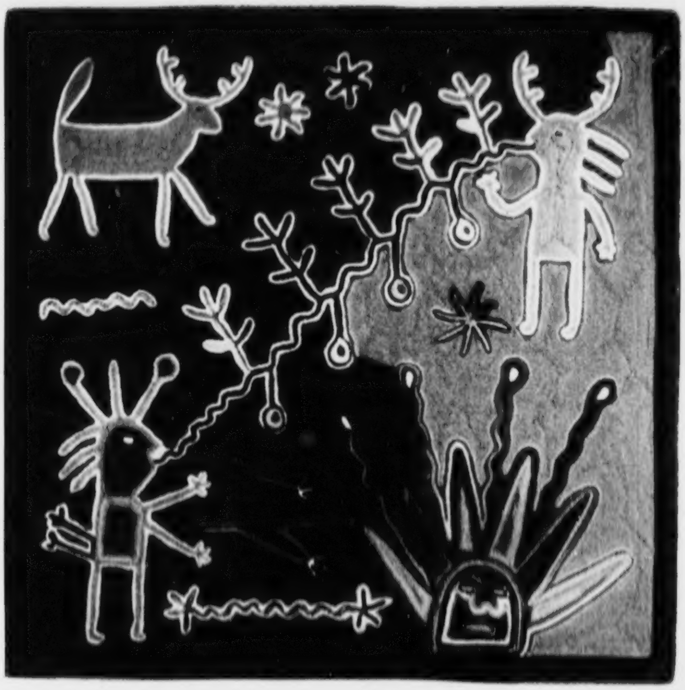
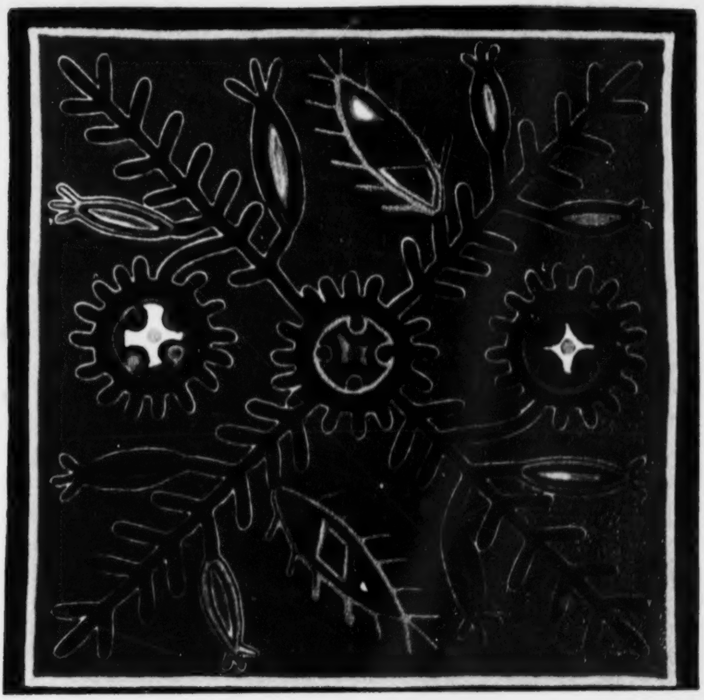


Plate 5

"*Mara'a kame* Singing
to the Deer-god
during the Fiesta
of *Esquite* (Sp: toasted
or parched corn)"
by M. González.
Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn
and Alan Bryan.

Plate 6

"Offerings of Corn
and *Nierikas*,
ready to be Blessed"
by Reymundo
de la Rosa.
Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn
and Alan Bryan.



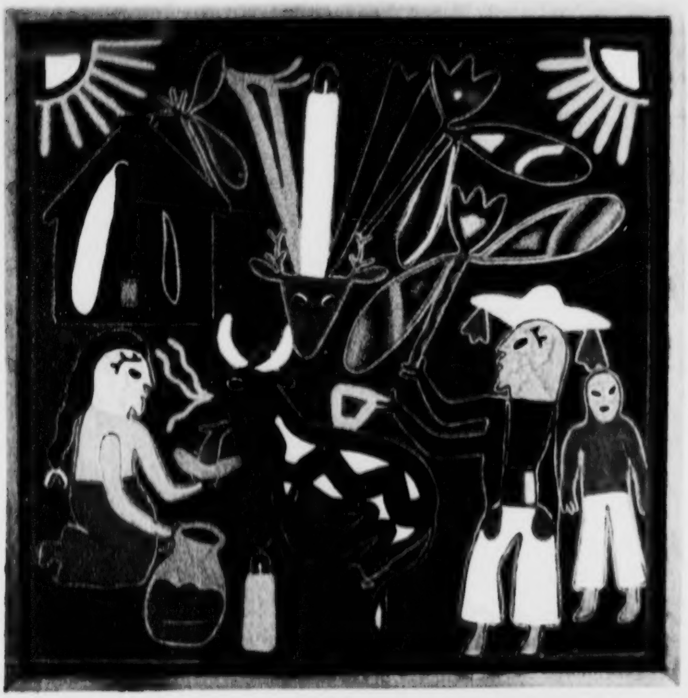


Plate 7

"Sacrificing a Bull
for Longevity"
by Heucame.
Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn
and Alan Bryan.

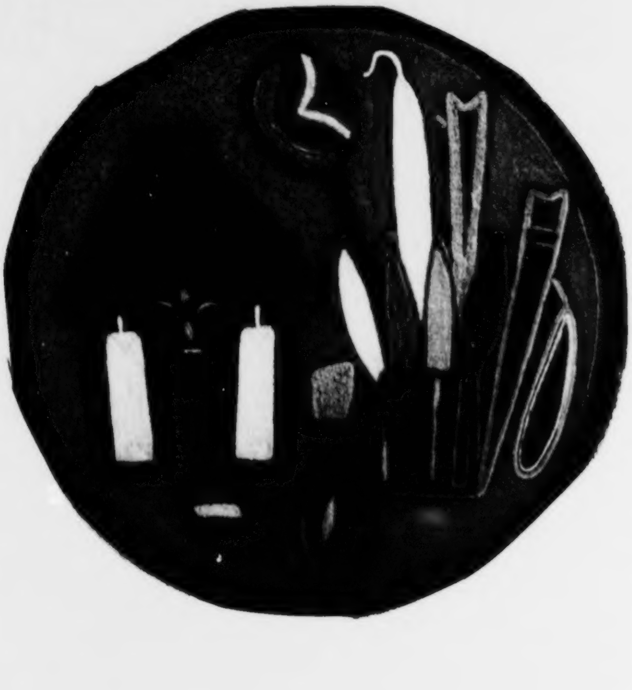


Plate 8

"The Temple of
the Deer-god"
attributed to Heucame.
Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn
and Alan Bryan.

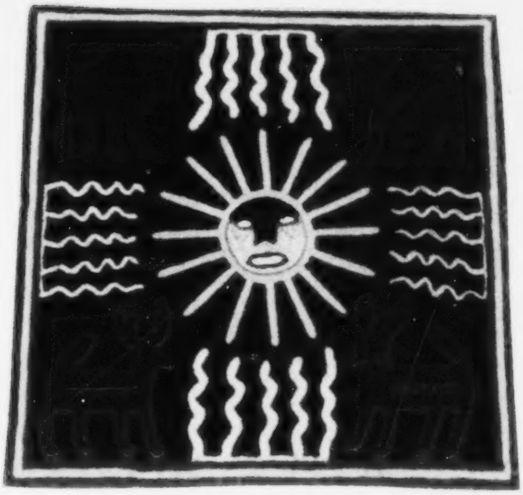
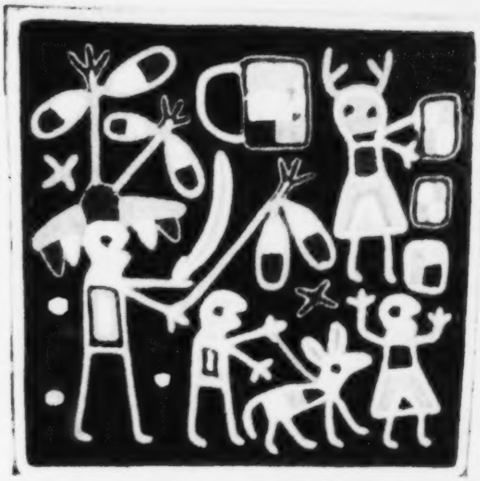


Plate 9

"Sun and Four Deer"
by José Isabel (Chavelo)
González de la Cruz.

Plate 10

"The Story of *Watakame*,
the Ancestor of the Huichol"
by Cresencio Pérez Robles.
Courtesy, Carol Martin.



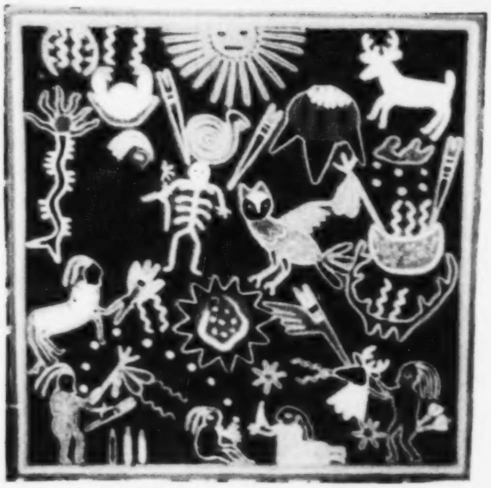


Plate 11

"The *Mara'a kame* Saves a
Patient from Death and
the Owl"
by Fabiano González Ríos.
Courtesy, artist.

Plate 12

"The Spirits come
to the Drum
during the Ceremony"
by José Isabel (Chavelo)
González de la Cruz.

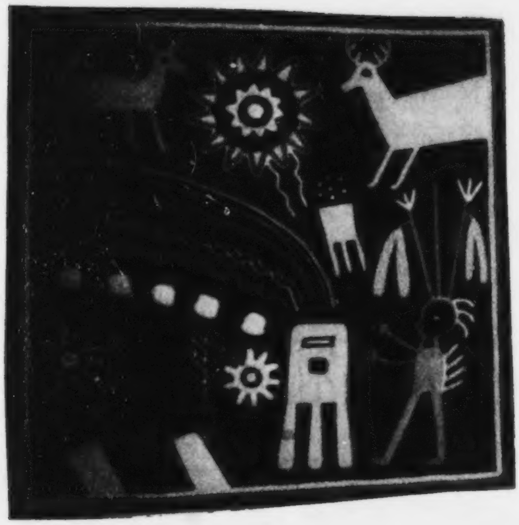


Plate 13

Huichol artist Eligio Carrillo Vicente making a yarn painting

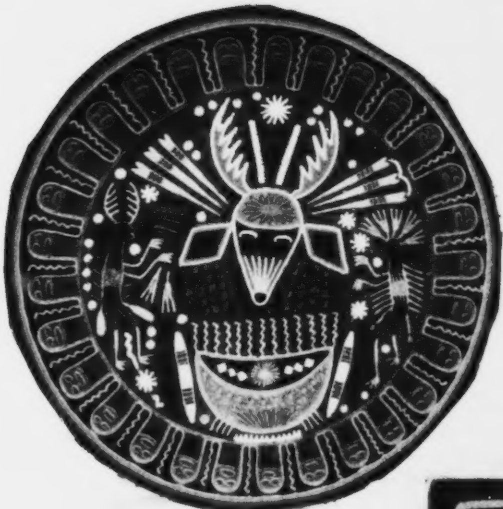
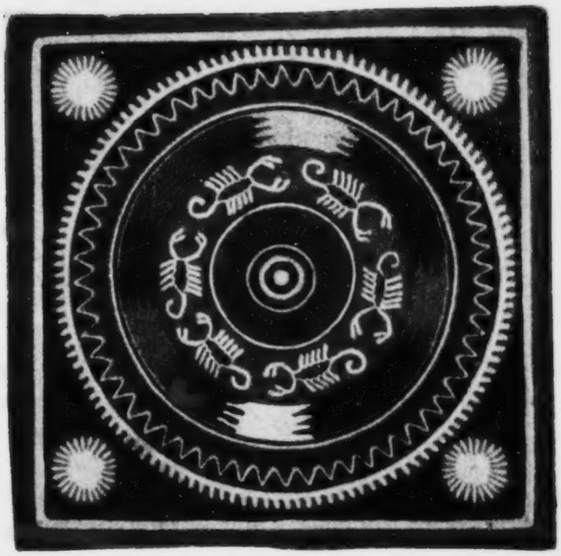


Plate 14

"The *Mara'a kame*
talks to
the Deer-god at Night"
by Eligio Carrillo Vicente
Courtesy, artist.

Plate 15

"The Mirror which
helps the *Mara'a kame*
to Heal"
by Eligio Carrillo.
Courtesy, Maria
von Bolschwing



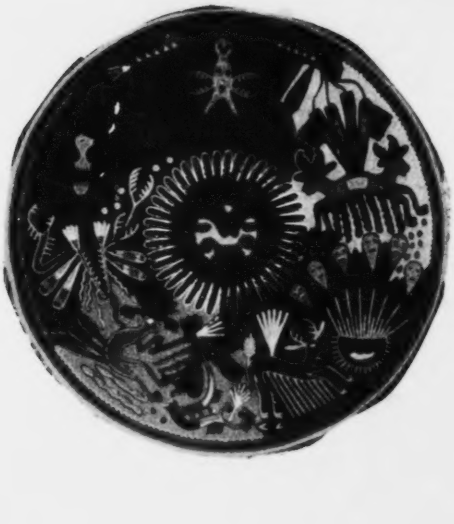


Plate 16

"The Sun-god as He
Appears at Midday"
By Eligio Carrillo Vicente
Courtesy, artist

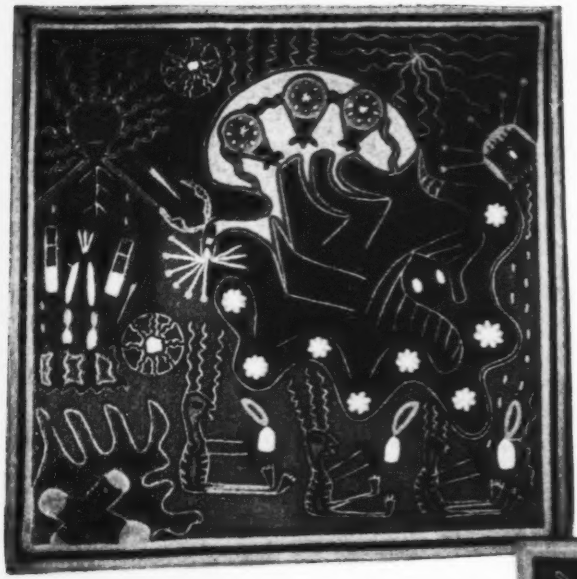


Plate 17

"Sacred Symbols of *Wirikuta*"
by Cristobal González.
Courtesy, Maria Von Bolschwing

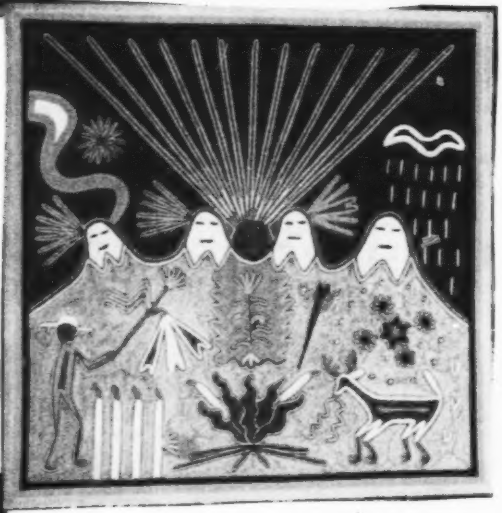


Plate 18

"The Four Mountains Represent
Powers of the Gods"
by David González Sánchez
Courtesy, artist

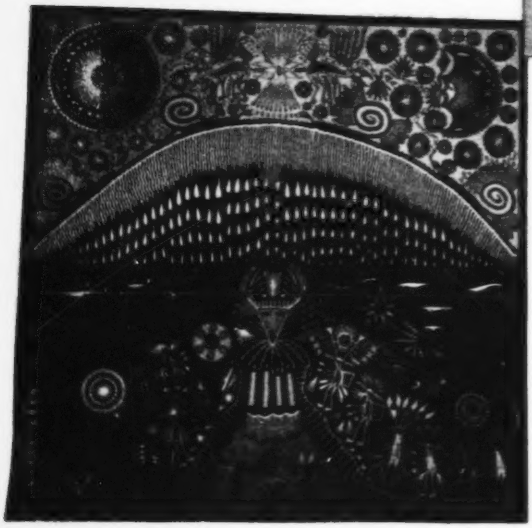


Plate 19

"Black Rain *Nierika*"
by Modesto Rivera Lemus
Courtesy, Arte
Mágico Huichol

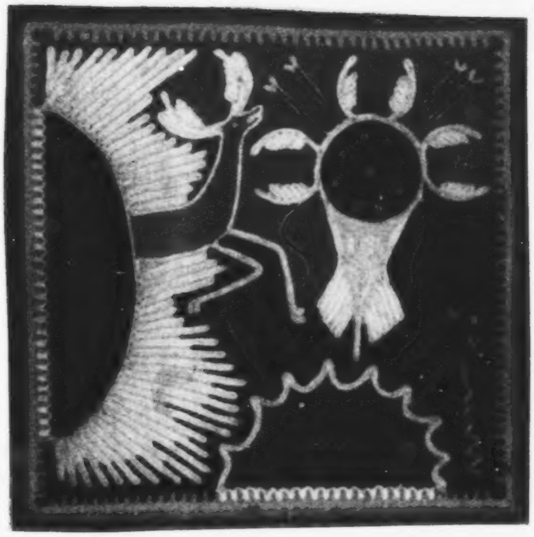


Plate 20

"The Deer-god *Kauyumari*
Emerges at Midnight"
by Modesto Rivera Lemus.
Courtesy, Martha Elliott.

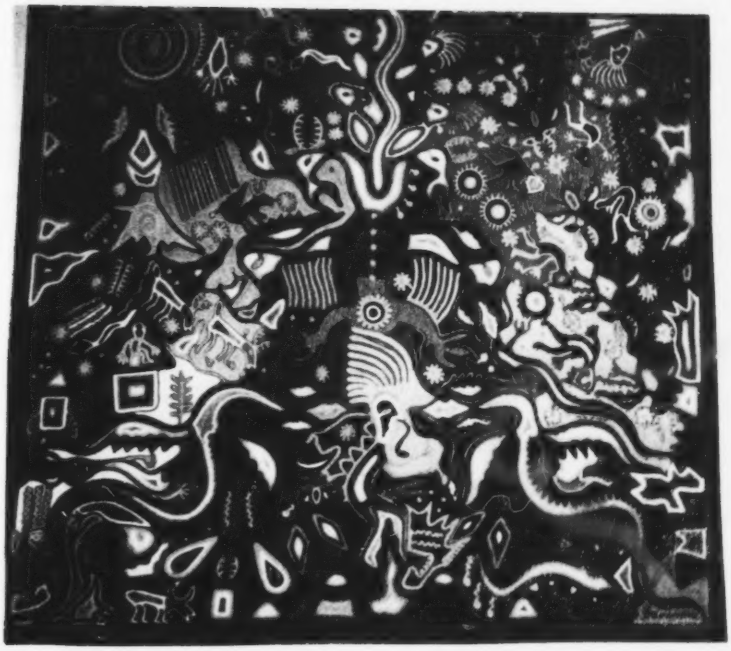


Plate 21

Untitled Number One by José Benítez Sánchez.
Courtesy, Instituto Nacional Indigenista

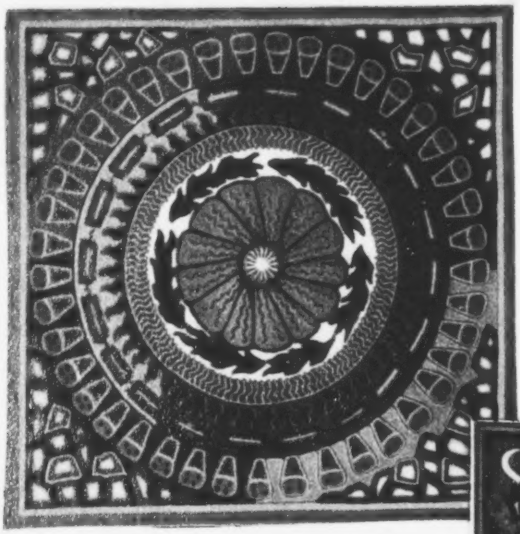


Plate 22

"Through Peyote, We see the *Nierika* of the Three Worlds."
by José Benítez Sánchez.
Courtesy, Maria
Von Bolschwing

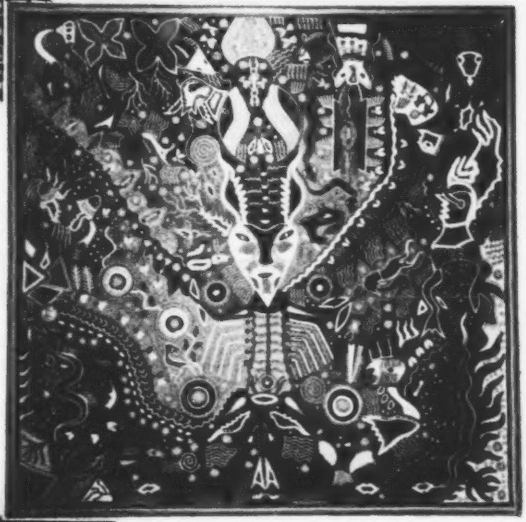


Plate 23

Untitled Number Two
by José Benítez Sánchez.
Courtesy, Park West Gallery.

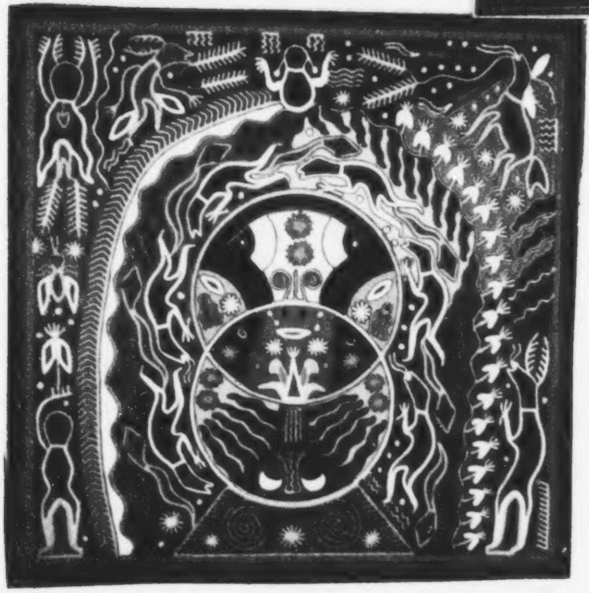


Plate 24

"Symbols of the
Birth of the Corn"
by Maximino Renteria
de la Cruz
Courtesy, Muwieri Gallery.

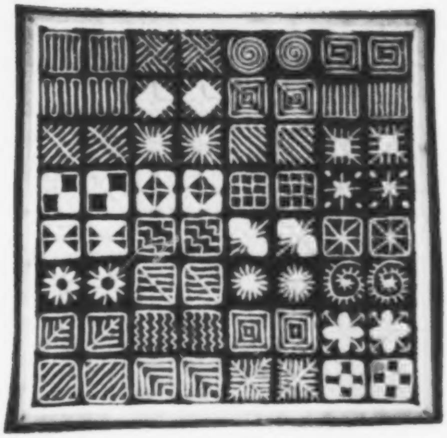
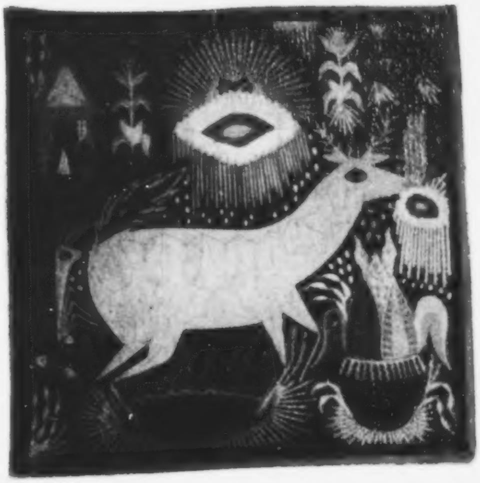


Plate 25

"*Nierika* Symbols which
Huichols Paint on
their Faces in Ceremonies"
by Santos Daniel
Carrillo Jiménez.
Courtesy, Arte Mágico Huichol.

Plate 26

"The Huichol Culture
is our Gods"
by Santos Daniel Carrillo Jiménez,
Andreas Jesucóta Cahtera de la Cruz,
and Antonio Vicente Bautista Rivera.
Courtesy, Maria Von Bolschwing.



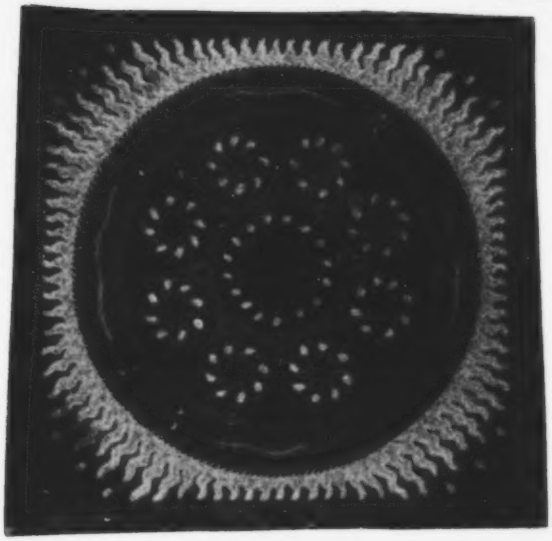


Plate 27

"The Deer-god *Kauyumari*
with Guardian Snakes"
by Santos Daniel
Carrillo Jiménez.
Courtesy, Martha Elliott.

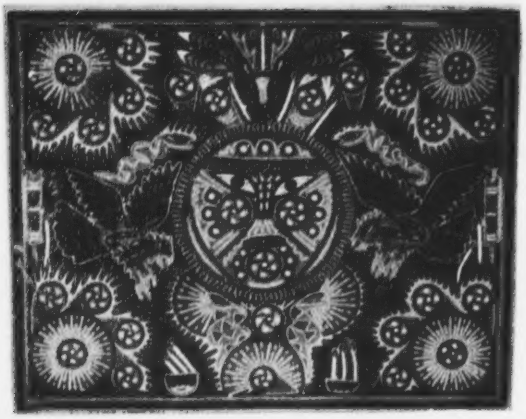


Plate 28.

"A Tribute to the Peyote-god"
by Cecilio Carrillo Bautista.
Courtesy, Isabel Jordan.

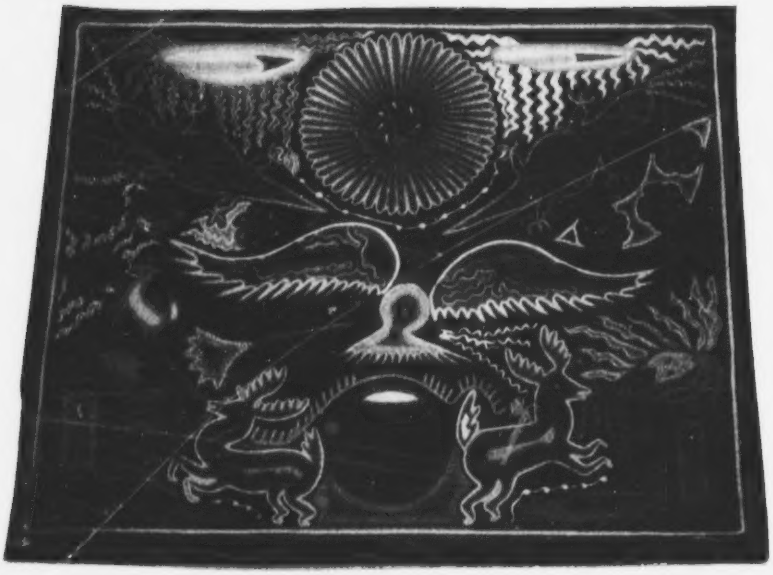


Plate 29

"*Aykutsi*, the Eagle which gives Rain" by José Bautista Carrillo.
Courtesy, Martha Elliott

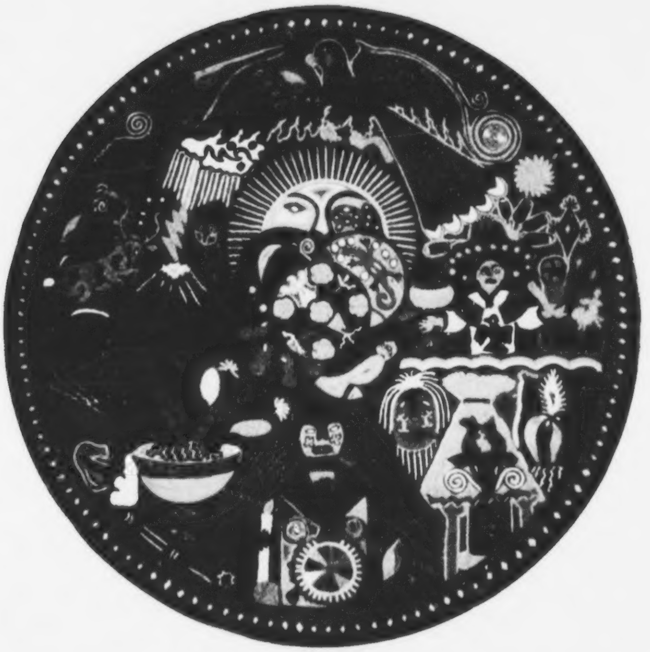
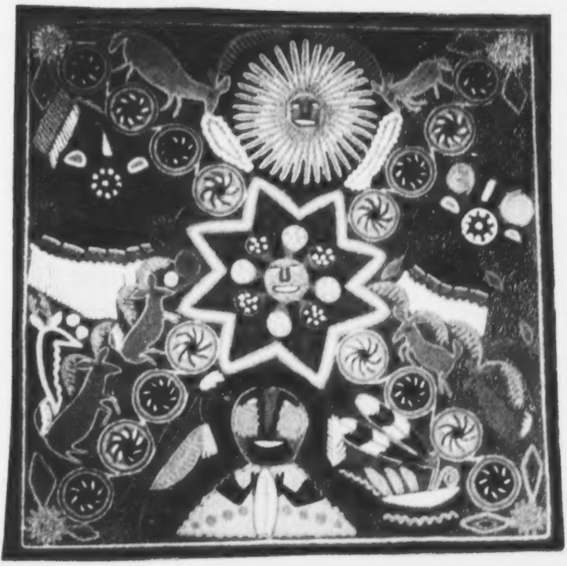


Plate 30

"Sun" by
Francisco Bautista.
Courtesy,
Jessie Hendry.

Plate 31

"When the *Mara'a kame*
eats Peyote, He Sees
Everything which Exists"
by Nicolas Bautista.
Courtesy, Arte Mágico Huichol.



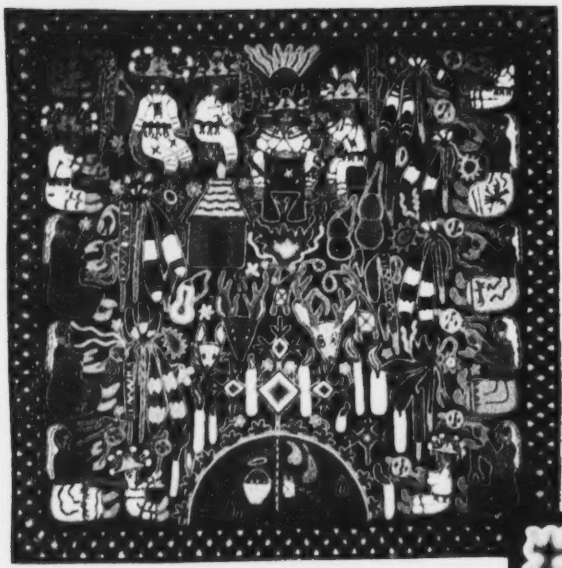


Plate 32

"The First Day of
the Drum Ceremony"
by José Castro.
Courtesy, Isabel Jordan.

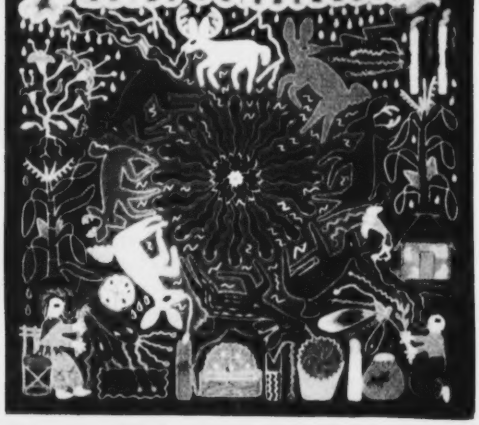


Plate 33

"The Deer Dance in
Wirikuta and Create Rain"
by José Bautista Carrillo.
Courtesy, Isabel Jordan.

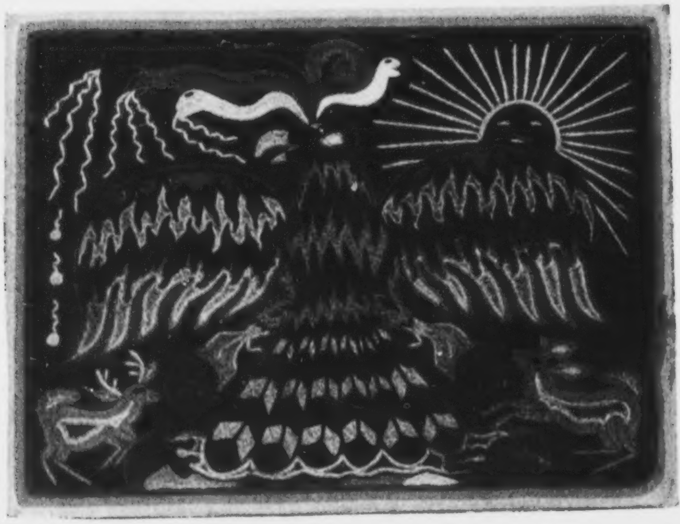
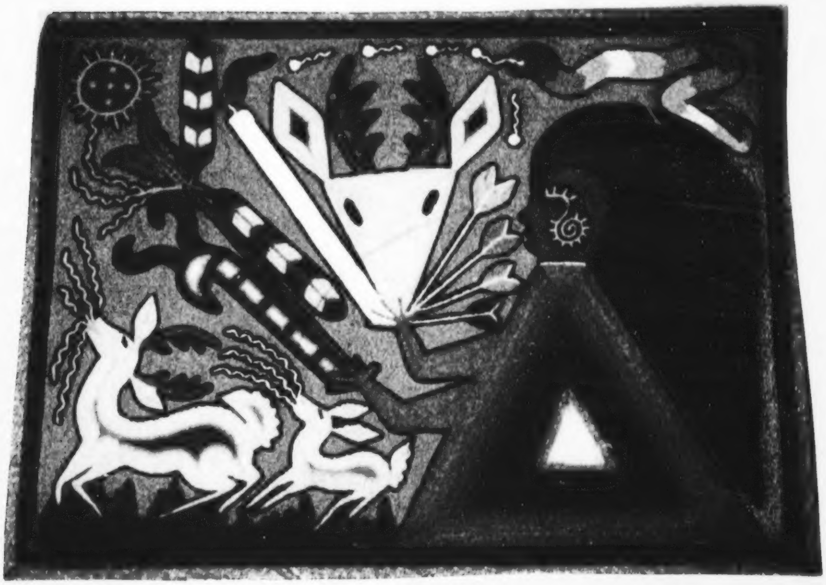


Plate 34

"*Reunar*, the Sacred
Mountain in
Wirikuta, Transforms
into an Eagle"
by Gonzálo
Hernández.

Plate 35

"*Yokawima*, Mother of the Deer" by Gonzálo Hernández.
Courtesy, Isabel Jordan



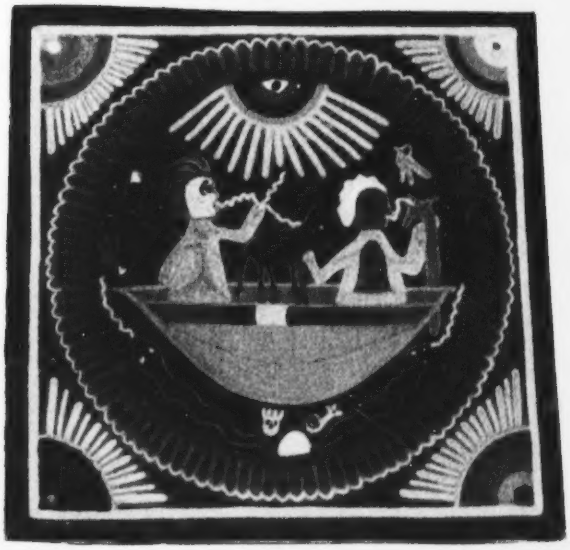


Plate 36

"The Story of the
Ark of *Takutsi Nakawe*"
by Alejandro López de la Torre.

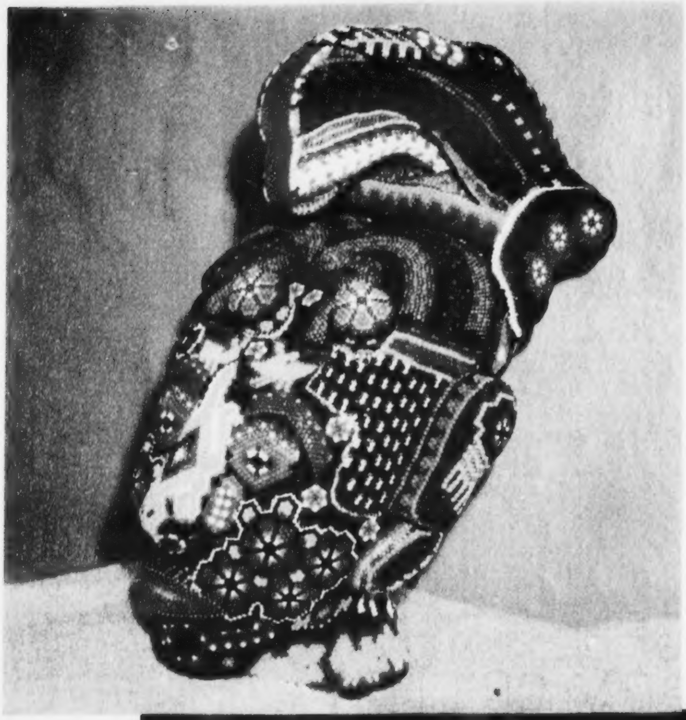


Plate 37

"Beaded Clay Head"
by Higinio
Bautista Bautista.
Courtesy,
Pyramid Galería.

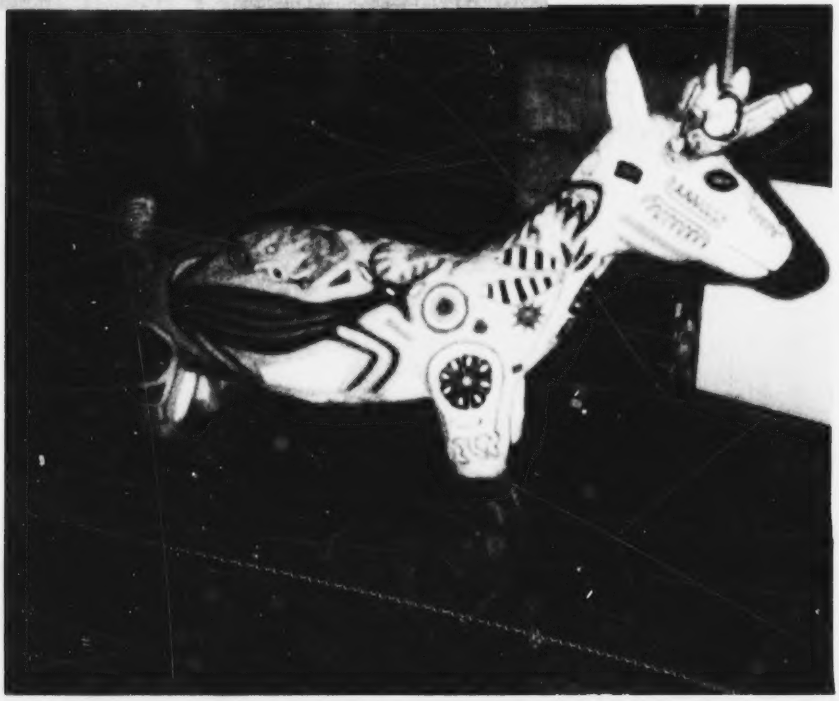


Plate 38

"Yarn-Painted Deer Sculpture" by Antonio. Courtesy, Pyramid Galería

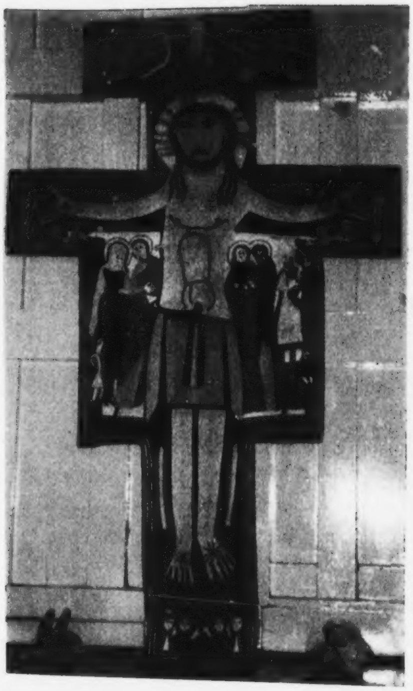
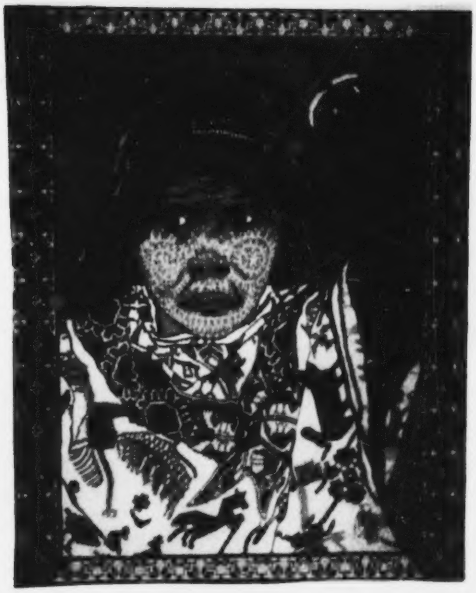


Plate 39

"Christ on Cross" by unknown artist.
Courtesy, Basilica of Zapopan.

Plate 40

"Huichol Woman"
Yarn painting by
non-Huichol artist,
Francisco Duran Villareal.
Courtesy, Pyramid Galería.



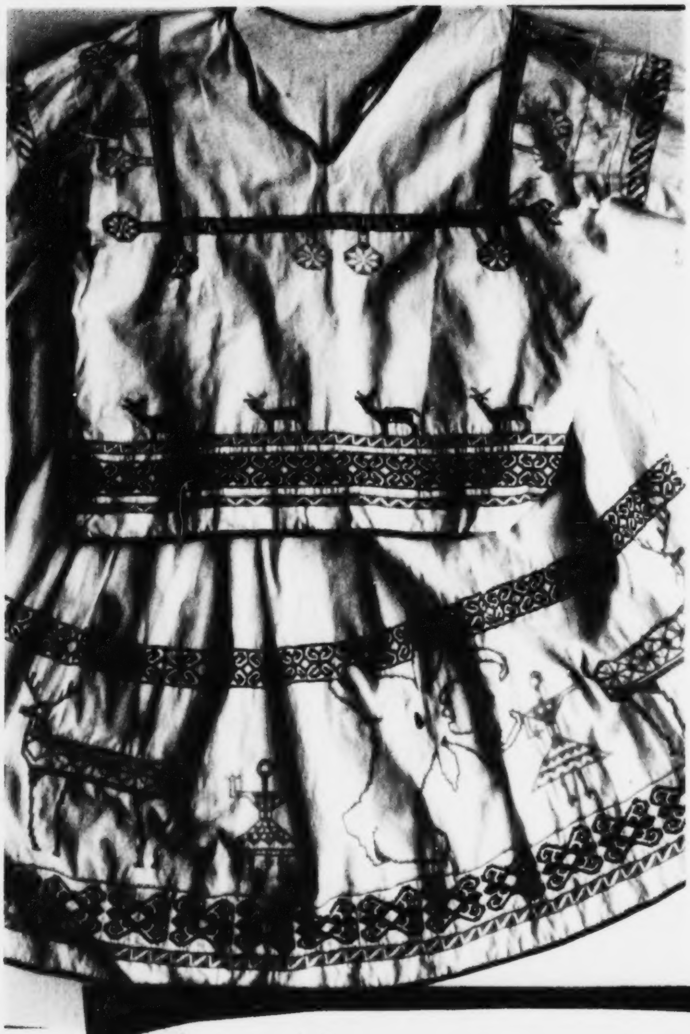


Plate 41

Embroidered Woman's Dress in Bajito Colours, by Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos

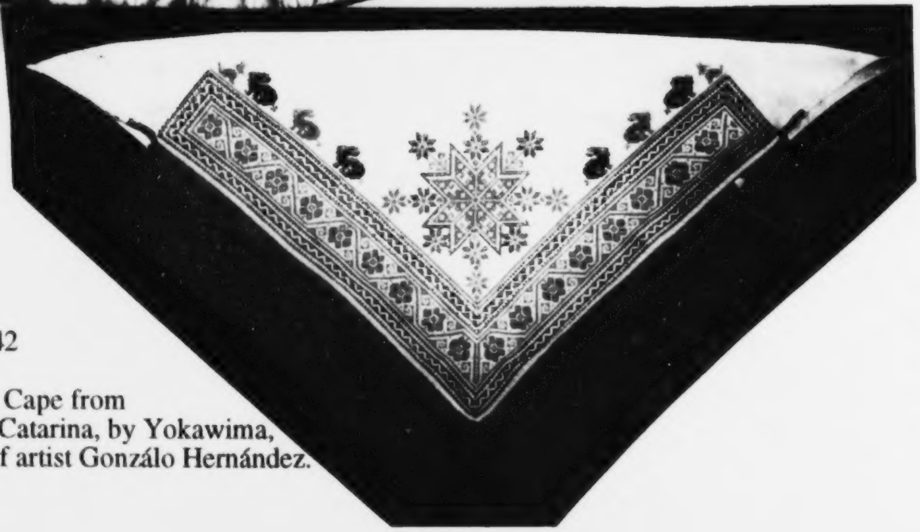


Plate 42

Man's Cape from Santa Catarina, by Yokawima, wife of artist Gonzálo Hernández.

APPENDIX 5
TEXTS OF COLOUR PLATES

The texts written here are translations of the texts written in Spanish on the backs of the yarn paintings. I have tried to retain as much as possible the sense and wording of the originals, while editing the texts so that they can be understood by western readers. Some paintings have no text, or it was not possible for me to see it; for example, I was unable to see the back of some large, heavy paintings because they were difficult to remove and owners did not want to rehang them. The numbers marked (#) refer to negatives in my collection.

Plate 1
"Eagle and *Nierika*" by unknown artist.
#94-2-20. Courtesy, Instituto Nacional Indigenista.
No text available.

Plate 2
"Huichol Star Constellations" by Eliseo Castro Villa.
#93-1-21. Courtesy, Marina Anguiano.
This represents the sky, the moon, and the constellations of stars with their Huichol names: the eagle, *teka* [Hui: translation unknown], the deer, the tiger, the scorpion, the fish, and the "god's eye" in the centre of the sky.

Plate 3
"The Goddess of the Corn-field" by Cristobal González.
60 cm x 60 cm. #91-1-5. Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan.
This depicts the goddess of corn from whom one asks the miracle of growing much corn.

Plate 4
"The Birth of the Sun-god at *Reunar*, a Volcano in *Wirikuta*" by Urra Temai.
60 cm x 60 cm. #91-1-17. Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan.
This yarn painting depicts the time when the young star opened a hole in the hills, in order that the sun could spring forth in *Wirikuta* at Real de Catorce. The star was

already carrying his arrow, his *nierika*, his *tugvarra* [Hui: translation unknown]. This yarn painting shows the hills that were formed as the sun came out of them. From this time forward, they [the *mara'a kate*] heard the sun's words by means of his arrow and his *nierika*. It seems that by means of these implements, the singers could hear the sun's words, by means of his arrow and *nierika*.

Plate 5
"*Mara'a kame* Singing to the Deer-god during the Fiesta of *Esquite* (Sp: toasted or parched corn)" by M. González.
60 cm x 60 cm. #91-1-11. Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan.
This depicts the ears of corn that are set aside, so that after the harvest the people can hold a fiesta. This fiesta is called the *Fiesta de Esquite*.

Plate 6
"Offerings of Corn and *Nierikas*, ready to be Blessed" by Reymundo de la Rosa.
60 cm x 60 cm. #91-1-7. Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan.
These are the things which happen in *Wirikuta* at Real de Catorce before the people hold the festival of the new corn. The corn must be blessed by the singer; this is the person who blesses the new corn and the squashes, so that the people can eat them. If they are not blessed, god will not take notice of them.

Plate 7
"Sacrificing a Bull for Longevity" by Heucame.
#91-1-2. Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan.
Longevity ceremony [text in English].

Plate 8
"The Temple of the Deer-god" attributed to Heucame.
#91-1-1. Courtesy, Ruth Gruhn and Alan Bryan.
No text available.
Chavelo González de la Cruz describes this painting as a representation of the temple of the Huichols. The temple is the Deer-god itself; the objects in front are the offerings to the deer. He commented that this is an excellent painting because it is original; that is, it is an old style of painting, made in a traditional way such as the

circle. He also implies that the concepts it depicts are also traditional.

Plate 9
"Sun and Four Deer" by José Isabel (Chavelo) González de la Cruz.
30 cm x 30 cm. #94-10-35. Author's collection.
This is a traditional style of *nierika*, with deer on either side of a sun/*nierika*.

Plate 10
"The Story of *Watakame*, the Ancestor of the Huichol" by Cresencio Pérez Robles.
#93-3-4. Courtesy, Carol Martin.
This painting refers to a Huichol legend of a man called *Watakame*, the clearer of fields. *Takutsi Nakawe* warned him a great flood was coming, and that he should build an ark, and bring with him seeds of corn and beans, and a little black dog. Watakame holds his machete in his hand; the painting also shows his little dog and the seeds in a basket. After the flood, the dog transformed into a woman and married Watakame; their descendents were the Huichol people. [See also Plate #36 for a depiction of *Takutsi Nakawe* and *Watakame* in the Ark.]

Plate 11
"The *Mara'a kame* Saves a Patient from Death and the Owl" by Fabiano González Ríos.
60 cm x 60 cm. #94-1-13. Courtesy, artist.
This painting shows a *mara'a kame* curing a sick person. He is praying so that the person will be cured. But the devil wants to take him; and the devil is passing his powers to the skeleton, which is death. Death wants to carry him off, but the other powers will not let him. The owl is a companion of Death. He warns of Death's intentions. Then the *mara'a kame* talks to the powers and negotiates with them to save the patient. He persuades them to let the person live. The price is that the patient must make certain offerings. The gods charge him; make him pay.

Now Death wants to take the patient, but he is unable to do so. He says to the *mara'a kame*, "Why didn't you give me the sick person, because I want to carry him off." The *mara'a kame* says, "No, now is not the time." They bargain, and the *mara'a kame* offers to pay Death something else. But first, Death has to go away and come back another time. So Death goes away and doesn't take anything.

Plate 12
"The Spirits come to the Drum during the Ceremony" by José Isabel (Chavelo) González de la Cruz.
60 cm x 60 cm. Author's collection.
Drum Dance-Song: The spiritually mature person uses the drum to direct his prayer. The feathered arrows on the head represent the specific intention or purpose of the prayer. The song is to ask for understanding of the vision, which is the design in between the deer. The peyote cactus-medicinal plant is used in the ceremony for its healing and concentration-enhancing properties. The deer symbolizes peace-fast-smart-as per its earthly behaviour, and is called the Elder Brother- a spirit of counsel. The wavy lines are the prayer song--the straight lines are the divine response. The arrows in the rocks at bottom left are the thanksgiving votives left in the desert where the medicine is hunted. The white spheres are the souls of the children who dance around the drum. The white is the purity of innocence of their souls. They are connected to the drum--meaning that unless the older generation teaches the children the old spiritual ways and the relationship is balanced--the prayer will be powerless. [text transcribed in English by Edmond Faubert].

Plate 13
Huichol artist Eligio Carrillo Vicente making a yarn painting. #94-1-3.

Plate 14
"The *Mara'a kame* talks to the Deer-god at Night" by Eligio Carrillo Vicente.
#94-1-10. Courtesy, artist.
This represents the power of the Deer-god. It is a ceremony taking place at night. The night is dark but the *mara'a kame* lights it up with his power. He is calling in the gods, who gather around and talk to the *mara'a kame*. All around are the spirits of the peyote, who appear as little girls. The *mara'a kame* is communicating with the Deer-god, which is born in the fire.

Before the person goes on a pilgrimage, a ceremony is held and the candles are blessed with the smoke of copal. This painting shows the candles above, and the copal incense coming from a bowl below.

Plate 15

"The Mirror which helps the *Mara'a kame* to Heal" by Eligio Carrillo.

#94-4-15. Courtesy, Maria von Bolschwing.

This is a symbol of the gods; it is the *nierika* of the Deer-god, the mirror of the *mara'a kame* and of *Kauyumari*. With its help, the shaman cures. It is a very sacred thing to do, healing people.

Plate 16

"The Sun-god as He Appears at Midday" By Eligio Carrillo Vicente.

#94-1-1. Courtesy, artist.

This painting represents the powers of the sun and the powers of the *mara'a kame*. The sun decrees that there are certain requirements to fulfill in order to become a *mara'a kame*. We must take offerings to the place which is sacred to the sun. The Sun-god tells the Deer-god, and the Deer-god translates the sun's message to the *mara'a kame*. The *mara'a kame* then tells the people, so it is as though there were three interpreters. The Sun-god says that these are the places you must go to; and these are the offerings you must carry with you, anointed with blood, such as the blood of a bull or a deer. The *mara'a kame* is discovering what the Sun-god wants us to do to fulfill our obligation.

The power of the *mara'a kame* comes from the Deer-god, shown here as a deer. It can also transform into peyote, into a snake, and into an eagle, shown on the left side. They are all depicted in this painting. For that reason, everything you see here means the same thing. This painting represents all the powers which exist.

This painting represents the learning which a *mara'a kame* must do, and the places he or she goes to in order to learn. When we go to the place of the Sun, these people come out. They are called *ürükate*, the dead spirits of our ancestors. They come and the *mara'a kame* blesses them with copal incense. They don't intend harm; they are content with the copal. The *mara'a kame* arranges it so that no harm comes to anyone.

The sun is shown as though at mid-day, high up in the blue sky, looking down. His yellow light shines down and illuminates the *mara'a kame*. The person at the top is also the sun, because the sun can convert into a person.

Plate 17
"Sacred Symbols of *Wirikuta*" by Cristobal González.
#94-4-6. Courtesy, Maria Von Bolschwing.
This is where the *mara'a kame* encounters peyote which is also the deer.

Plate 18
"The Four Mountains Represent Powers of the Gods" by David González Sánchez.
60 cm x 60 cm. #94-8-21. Courtesy, artist.
The four mountains represent powers of the gods. They are the wind, *Tatewari* (Hui: the Fire-god), the sun, and the rain. Below the mountains, the *mara'a kame* is praying to the fire.

Plate 19
"Black Rain *Nierika*" by Modesto Rivera Lemus.
#94-3-25. Courtesy, Arte Mágico Huichol.
This is a *nierika*. The centre part represents the goddess of the rain; and also the creation of the water and all kinds of water-creatures, such as whales, crocodiles, octopi, starfish, sharks; and also the Snake-goddess of the water, and shrimps--all kinds of fish which live in the water. The centre shows the things that exist in the water.

The part above represents the Sun-god and the moon, when the moon eliminated the Sun-god [during an eclipse]. The moon also has an effect on all kinds of animals which are about to be born. Here I show the animals of the water and of the earth, with a person who we call "eclipse" as intermediary. *Kauyumari*, the Deer-god, and the Snake-goddess who comes from the water are communicating with the Sun-god and the Moon. Here also are depicted the stars which surround the sun and the moon.

The bottom part represents a sacred mountain; here lives the Spirit of *Kauyumari*, the face of the Deer. Only those people who fulfill a vow in the sacred places [see him], for which reason they go to these places, walking all the way; and the *nierikas* which are shown here are a part of that sacred place. The two people underneath are the ones who hold up the sacred place.

Plate 20
"The Deer-god *Kauyumari* Emerges at Midnight" by Modesto Rivera Lemus.
30 cm x 30 cm. #94-8-9. Courtesy, Martha Elliott.
This painting symbolizes the sacred place. When arrows are offered, that is how the vow is paid. At midnight the Deer-god *Kauyumari* emerges.

Plate 21
Untitled Number One by José Benítez Sánchez.
#94-2-22. Courtesy, Instituto Nacional Indigenista
No text available.

Plate 22
"Through Peyote, We see the *Nierika* of the Three Worlds" by José Benítez Sánchez.
#94-4-0. Courtesy, Maria Von Bolschwing
Here we see as though we were encountering the portal into the three worlds, through which we gain understanding. *Kauyumari*, the Deer-god, decided to make his thought take form, so that he could walk around to the four cardinal points of the world. It is the same as the journey we make to the sacred places in this world; that is how we are given to understand this life, so as to have more understanding and life in the road that passes through the world.

Plate 23
Untitled Number Two by José Benítez Sánchez.
#94-5-5. Courtesy, Park West Gallery.
No text available.

Plate 24
"Symbols of the Birth of the Corn" by Maximino Renteria de la Cruz.
#94-7-2. Courtesy, Muwieri Gallery.
Here we see the symbol of the birth of the corn.

Plate 25
"*Nierika* Symbols which Huichols Paint on their Faces in Ceremonies" by Santos Daniel Carrillo Jiménez.

#94-5-13. Courtesy, Arte Mágico Huichol.
This painting depicts what are called "ritual symbols." When the pilgrims go to Real de Catorce, that is to say *Wirikuta*, after they return they paint their faces with a yellow tree [root] and make these designs.

Plate 26
"The Huichol Culture is our Gods" by Santos Daniel Carrillo Jiménez, Andreas Jesucóta Cahtera de la Cruz, and Antonio Vicente Bautista Rivera.
#94-4-11. Courtesy, Maria Von Bolschwing.
This yarn painting is a manifestation of the Huichol culture. It represents *Kauyumari*, which means "our Brother Deer", who is very important for the Huichols because he is the guide of the *mara'a kate*, especially when they sing. *Kauyumari* is standing on top of the Earth, and is solid. But at the same time, he is emitting clouds; that is, when he speaks, clouds come forth.

Niwetsika is below on the left, which shows different colours of corn. It also contains the clouds, and the corn-fields, and the goddess *Nakawe*, in her sacred house. The powerful god which appears as the sun is also present, and in front are the clouds as though they wanted to cover him.

Plate 27
"The Deer-god *Kauyumari* with Guardian Snakes" by Santos Daniel Carrillo Jiménez.
#94-8-17. Courtesy, Martha Elliott.
In the centre is the Deer-god *Kauyumari* transforming into peyotes, such as a big one in the centre and other smaller ones around it. The serpents are manifestations of the guardians of *Kauyumari*. The flames that are around *Kauyumari* represent his force and power.

Plate 28.
"A Tribute to the Peyote-god" by Cecilio Carrillo Bautista.
#94-5-37. Courtesy, Isabel Jordan.
No text available.

Plate 29
"*Aykutsi*, the Eagle which gives Rain" by José Bautista Carrillo.

#94-8-13. Courtesy, Martha Elliott.

No text available.

According to Stacy Schaefer (personal communication), the term *Aykutsi* refers to the barrel cactus in *Wirikuta*. There are many myths which revolve around this cactus. I have retained the title because it was the title written on the back of the painting.

Plate 30

"Sun" by Francisco Bautista.

#94-7-37. Courtesy, Jessie Hendry.

No text available.

Plate 31

"When the *Mara'a kame* eats Peyote, He Sees Everything which Exists" by Nicolas Bautista.

#94-3-21. Courtesy, Arte Mágico Huichol.

This yarn painting represents the things which the Huichols carry on from our ancestors throughout history. For example, this is a singing *mara'a kame* who is making a peyote pilgrimage. He is *empeyotado* (Sp: under the influence of peyote), and everything comes to him in a vision. When a person eats peyote, he or she sees everything which exists: all kinds of animals, plants, and the light which illuminates us throughout the world.

Plate 32

"The First Day of the Drum Ceremony" by José Castro.

#94-7-22. Courtesy, Isabel Jordan.

The first day of the Drum Ceremony, we travel to *Wirikuta* by means of the song. The children with their offerings take part in the ceremony, seated to the right and left of the singer, who guides them while beating the drum. Below we see the bow and the “god's eye”; and the main fruits, such as the squash, new corn, beans, watermelon, bowls of deer-soup and fish-soup.

Plate 33

"The Deer Dance in *Wirikuta* and Create Rain" by José Bautista Carrillo.

#94-5-32. Courtesy, Isabel Jordan.

The circle of deer represents the ancient gods dancing in *Wirikuta*, the Huichol holy land. The dust raised is called "*Tumuanite.*" It is often seen there, and is considered to be the smoke of the Gods. It is transformed into clouds--giving droplets of rain. At the centre of *Wirikuta* is the peyote with snakes, like people, going off in all directions, but always returning. The Huichol *mara'a kame* is communicating with the gods through the round *nierika*--a window into the spiritual realm, while a Huichol woman offers prayer feathers and *tejuino*, the ceremonial corn drink [text transcribed in English by Isabel Jordan].

Plate 34
"*Reunar*, the Sacred Mountain in *Wirikuta*, Transforms into an Eagle" by Gonzálo Hernández.
30 cm x 40 cm. #94-10-36. Author's collection.
This represents a peyote vision in *Wirikuta*. *Reunar*, the Sacred Mountain also known as the Burnt Mountain, is transforming into a royal eagle, called *Werika Uimari*. The mountain is the altar of the sun, the place where the sun was born; and the eagle is the child of the sun. The wings of the eagle represent the mountains themselves [and have the shape of the mountain slopes]. The water is the spring of sacred water, called *Tatei Matinieri*, the site of the mother of all springs. The serpents bring the vision. The deer are both the male and female deer, and represent the elder brother.

Plate 35
"*Yokawima*, Mother of the Deer" by Gonzálo Hernández.
30 cm x 40 cm. #93-3-15. Courtesy, Isabel Jordan.
This depicts the Mother of all the Deer, called *Yokawima*. She lives high in the mountains, in the places which deer frequent. The painting shows the offerings which the Huichols take to her and leave in the places where deer live, where the sacred rocks are. The offerings are to ask the Mother's pardon for hunting the deer, and to ask that a snake or scorpion not sting the hunters. In order to ensure this, first they must make payment on the vow. The *nierikas* are the mirror; with it, it is possible to see what is in a person's thoughts.

Plate 36
"The Story of the Ark of *Takutsi Nakawe*" by Alejandro López de la Torre.
30 cm x 30 cm. #94-10-34. Author's collection.
This painting tells the story of the origin of the world as we know it, after a great flood. It shows *Takutsi Nakawe* and *Watakame* in the Ark, together with a little black dog.

Novelties and Arts related to yarn painting

Plate 37
"Beaded Clay Head" by Higinio Bautista Bautista.
#94-6-28. Courtesy, Pyramid Galería.

Plate 38
"Yarn-Painted Deer Sculpture" by Antonio.
#94-2-18. Courtesy, Pyramid Galería

Plate 39
"Christ on Cross" by unknown artist.
#94-10-9. Courtesy, Basilica of Zapopan.

Plate 40
"Huichol Woman" Yarn painting by non-Huichol artist, Francisco Duran Villareal.
#94-7-16. Courtesy, Pyramid Galería.

Plate 41
Embroidered Woman's Dress in Bajito Colours, by Guadalupe de la Cruz Ríos.
#91-1-18. Author's collection.

Plate 42
Man's Cape from Santa Catarina, by Yokawima, wife of artist Gonzálo Hernández.
#94-13-24. Author's Collection.

APPENDIX 6
DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A YARN PAINTING

In this study, many yarn paintings have been described in part, in relation to various aspects of aesthetic analysis. In this section, I will describe a single yarn painting in detail, in order to clarify how aesthetic analysis may be applied to a yarn painting in total. I will begin with the circumstances and characteristics of manufacture, then move to imagery, subject matter, and philosophical meaning.

The painting discussed here is Plate 14, "The *Mara'a kame* talks to the Deer-god at Night" by Eligio Carrillo Vicente. Since I interviewed the artist at some length, and taped him talking about this painting, I will include both my own comments and the artist's interpretation.

The painting is a large round painting, about 60 cm in diameter. It is made of commercial acrylic yarn on a plywood base, using white wax rather than Cera de Campeche. The artist had recently manufactured it shortly before I interviewed him in January 1994. He made the painting at his home, and stored it in a corner, wrapped in towels to protect it from dust, ready for a dealer to come and get it. When I arrived to interview him, he unwrapped it to show it to me.

The round shape is somewhat unusual, and indicates that the painting is probably being made by an artist with a secure means of selling paintings. Since round paintings are a less economical shape to cut out of a sheet of plywood, they are seldom made by artists who are working on a low profit margin. In fact, this is the case since Eligio has constant requests from dealers and can sell all his production easily.

The round shape is also a more traditional format, being more like the religious offerings. Thus, the artist is consciously imitating a traditional offering in a modern format. Eligio joked that for this reason he should charge more for the painting, since it is like the paintings taken as offerings on pilgrimages.

Eligio: This *nierika*, it is as though it is original. It is original, ancient. We are accustomed to make this one, this *nierika*, and it could cost more than the other yarn paintings that are square. Because this is an original one. This is how we make a yarn painting to carry to the seven points [sacred places].

The painting represents a segment of a ceremony--blessing the candles which will be offered to the gods on pilgrimage. Eligio points out that this represents a ceremony done when a person first begins on the path to become a *mara'a kame*. After the ceremony, the person will carry his or her offerings to the places which are sacred to the gods.

Eligio: We do a ceremony when we are going to begin as a *mara'a kame*. In order to be able to arrange everything with the gods, you have to go from point to point and speak with them [go on pilgrimages to sacred places]. Then here, you have to have your candle blessed, to be able to light it. When the *mara'a kame* is translating [for the gods during a ceremony], you should have your candles lit. Or present yourself before the gods with the candle lit also. But first they bless [the candles for the gods] with this, with sacred fire [copal incense]. They blow smoke on them [makes shsh sound of copal burning]...and now they can light them. Because without that, the gods will not receive them. For this reason, they must blow smoke, when they are doing the ceremony. Because the gods only permit it like that. It's just that that is what [the gods] are used to, and that's what they want, and so that's how we do it.

A second theme illustrated in Eligio's yarn painting is the power associated with the Deer-god, as seen by the *mara'a kame* at night during the ceremony. The centre of the painting is dominated by a large deer head with horns painted in gold, white, and blue. This represents the Deer-spirit, *Tamatsi Kauyumari*. Projecting from the top of the deer head are two candles. Below the deer head is a large bowl painted in yellow-green and gold. This represents the *putsi* (Hui: incense burner) which Huichols use to burn copal incense. The bowl is filled with coals from the fire, then chunks of copal--a dried tree resin--are sprinkled on the coals. The fragrant steam billows up, blessing and purifying the participants and their offerings of candles. The steam is represented by white lines above the bowl. On either side of the bowl are ears of corn, with long tassels; these represent a small cob of corn which the *mara'a kame* will lay on the *itari* (Hui: mat) in front of him

On either side of the Deer-spirit are humanlike figures. These represent the intermediaries between humans and gods in the ceremony. The figure on the left, with two feather-like horns projecting from its head, is another form of the Deer-Spirit which has transformed itself into an interpreter for the Fire-god. The figure on the right, with four sets of lines projecting from its head is the *mara'a kame*, who is talking to the Deer-spirit-interpreter, and translating on behalf of the other participants in the ceremony. Around the circumference are a ring of blue-green figures with faces indicated by red eyes and mouths, shown against a black background. These represent peyote spirits, who have been attracted to the ceremony. Eligio calls them *niñas* (Sp: little girls) and also *ürükate,* which he says are the ancestors of the Huichols, who live in Wirikuta.

Eligio: This [the Deer-man on the left] is the Deer-god but with the power there that the Deer-god gave him. The gods gave him power. Then here [in this painting], it represents when the *mara'a kame* is calling them [the gods or powers] now. In order to translate, with the gods gathered together; that's what all this indicates, when the gods gather around....Because the Deer-god is revealing this, he is saying it all. [The Deer-god is translating the speech of the gods for the *mara'a kame*.]

These, for example, these are the gods, in the form of peyotes. [The peyotes] which are people, these are little girls. That's how they seem. In the moment that this *nierika* is made, that's how they are represented, in the *nierika* where it is translated. They gather around. This [yarn painting], that's what it represents. And this represents the corn which the *mara'a kame* should put [on the mat in front of him or her], his or her little corn [Sp: *maïsito*] to be able to translate. And this is the guide, corn [Hui: *iku*] which is the one that works; that is, the deer god transforms into corn, which transforms into peyote. [The *mara'a kame* puts corn on the mat because it will transform into a deer and translate for him or her.]

And this one [the Deer-man on the left] is the same also. Yes, that's how this transforms. And this one [*mara'a kame* on the right] is praying. When these ones present themselves, this is what the *mara'a kame* is saying. Then these ones [gods] want prayer, conversation, from that person when he is there, it is his custom. Because he is asking for this. To pray to the fire, right? [Because the Deer-god] this one is born also in the fire.

Hope: The deer is?

Eligio: The deer can also become the fire. He is also born as the fire. He must speak, converse, and then they [the gods] transform, disappear. They transform into something else. That's how this is.

This candle we always make. It is to present to the gods. Or the arrow. And we are used to making these, presenting these at whatever place we carry them, we make the designs, we carry them to the seven places where there are gods. That is what we do.

Hope: And this [design of cup] below is the fire?

Eligio: That is the sacred fire of the gods. They throw in copal and "shsh" in order to bless this, to bless that, and the candles, so that everything might be blessed, to bless everything. Because...the Deer-god requires it this way of us, so that it might be blessed.

Hope: And this is the cup for the copal?

Eligo: Yes, the copal.

Hope: With the coals inside. How pretty!

Eligio: Yes.

Hope: And this here, that is his speech?

Eligio: Yes, that is his speech. That's what it is.

Hope: And this one has horns and this one doesn't have horns.

Eligio: This one is a *mara'akame*, a shaman, then.

Hope: With horns?

Eligio: It's as though it were the same, this one and this one [ie. the Deer-god and the *mara'a kame*]. It's as though this one had horns also. That's how he appears.

Hope: With his *muwieri* (Hui: shaman's plumes)?

Eligio: With his *muwieri*. And this is also *muwieri* (Hui: deer antlers), it is the same thing.

The painting as a whole represents the powers of the gods, as well as the power of the shaman to light up the night during a ceremony. The painting is a *nierika*, in the sense that it represents occurrences in the world of the gods, as well as in the world of humans. It shows the deities and the humans interacting together in the same plane. It represents that view of reality as a *mara'a kame* might see it through his or her own eyes.

The colours in Eligio's painting of the Deer-god are also interesting. Eligio explains that he has used bajito colours, because the painting represents powers at night. Sometimes the artist has been quite realistic; for example, he explains that the Peyote-spirits are shown against the black of the night sky, just as they appear during the ceremony. They only become visible against the sky as the *mara'a kame*'s power lights up the sky at night like a searchlight. The centre of the painting represents the power of the *mara'a kame*; that is, the ability to light up the sky as though with electric light.

This painting is attributed to shamanic vision; Eligio suggests that this is how he himself sees events during a ceremony. It is also an example of how my own visionary experience complements the Huichols' and enables me to understand a yarn painting in more depth. I understand this yarn painting since one time I saw the head and shoulders of a large deer emerging out of the fire, in the centre of a ring of people and talking to the *mara'a kame* who was leading the ceremony. Thus, I see this painting as an actual representation of how a person might see events during a ceremony.

This painting is also interesting to compare to several other paintings which are illustrated in this thesis, and which demonstrate variations on a similar theme. For example, Plate 5, *Mara'a kame* Singing to the Deer-god during the Fiesta of *Esquite* (Sp: toasted or parched corn)" by M. González shows the same interaction of *mara'a kame*, Fire-god, and Deer-god as both person and as animal during a ceremony. Plate 20, "The Deer-god *Kauyumari* Emerges at Midnight" by Modesto Rivera, a former apprentice of Eligio, also shows the Deer-spirit emerging at midnight in *Wirikuta*.

These examples demonstrate the similarity of concept or theme between yarn paintings which may differ quite strikingly in design. It also cautions us to be careful about generalizing about meaning in art. Clearly, the Huichol cultural tradition allows yarn painters considerable freedom in how they express a concept in art; or, in other words, artists do not have to follow a standard model or pattern to express an idea. They may choose different ways of depicting the same idea. The yarn paintings cited above are quite different in form and composition, yet each expresses similar ideas--how the Deer-god becomes visible at night during a ceremony, and how it communicates with the *mara'a kame*.